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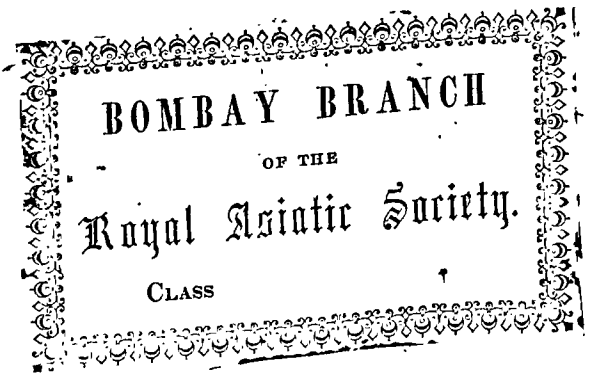

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STOWE-BYRON CONTROVERSY:

A COMPLETE RÉSUMÉ

OF

ALL THAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN AND SAID UPON THE SUBJECT,

RE-PRINTED FROM "THE TIMES," "SATURDAY REVIEW," DAILY NEWS," "PALL MALL GAZETTE," "DAILY TELEGRAPH," ETC.

TOGETHER WITH

AN IMPARTIAL REVIEW

OF THE

98439

MERITS OF THE CASE.

BY

THE EDITOR OF "ONCE A WEEK."

"Seek out—less often sought than found—
A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around and choose thy ground,
And take thy rest."

(Byron, 1824.)

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INTRODUCTION.

THE appearance of an article from the pen of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, published simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic: in the United States in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and in this country in *Macmillan's Magazine*, has excited an almost unparalleled amount of discussion, and has completely aroused the literary world from the lethargy into which it commonly falls at this dull season of the year.

Mrs. Stowe's article, which is in her very worst style, being throughout rambling and confused to a most unsatisfactory degree, is entitled the "True Story of Lady Byron's Life," and in it Mrs. Stowe states that during her second visit to this country in the year 1856, she was summoned by Lady Byron, and received from her lips the terrible narrative she now, after a silence of thirteen years, first puts before the world, which is purely and simply a charge against Lord Byron of incestuous intercourse with his own sister; and the person who brought that frightful accusation against one of the brightest stars amongst our national poets was his own wife, who, as Mrs. Stowe says, was in a position to support her allegation by the most convincing evidence, and did succeed in satisfying Mrs. Stowe's mind of its truth, and winning from her the most profound sympathy. It is not to be wondered at that the most remarkable sensation has been produced in England —and in only a slightly less degree in America—by the publication of this most extraordinary revelation; and like most other and similar questions, it has two distinct sides: there are those who believe Lord Byron to have been incapable of the conduct laid to his charge, and who ascribe Lady Byron's

statement to Mrs. Stowe to the influence of a monomania; whilst others, and amongst them some of our most respectable journals, accept the account of the real cause of the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, given by the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," as the whole truth of the matter. Considering the unequalled interest felt in this case, and in its adequate discussion, we have thought that we should be doing the public good service if we placed before them clearly the whole facts of the case; the substance of the important statements in Mrs. Stowe's sensational article in *Macmillan*, portions of which have already appeared in most of the daily or weekly journals; the opinions of the best writers in the newspapers and reviews; the letters from different noblemen and gentlemen more or less interested in the family history of the Byrons, which have appeared during the last fortnight; and to this we have thought fit to add what we believe to be a thoroughly impartial review of the merits of the case as it stands. In addition, we venture to prefix a few of the leading facts of Lord Byron's life; these, doubtless, are quite well known to most of our readers, but there may still be some few who will be glad of an opportunity of just refreshing their memories in the matter of dates and such points as are most easily forgotten. We therefore offer no apology for presenting here a short, succinct account of a few of the most prominent events of the poet's life, which may be considered to bear immediately upon the matter under consideration. Around the brilliant genius of Byron there has ever been a sentiment of regret, a feeling of sorrow for his unhappy differences with his wife, a genuine admiration for his splendid intellect, a sad regret at his early and lamentable death when in the very prime of life. Lord Byron was born on the 22nd of January, 1788, at Holles Street, London. He was shortly afterwards baptized, the Duke of Gordon and Colonel Duff, of Fetteresso, being his godfathers. He was, as is well known, the only child of his mother; his mother soon after removed to Aberdeen, and here his infancy was spent, and

here he first went to school to a Mr. Bowers. He was subsequently educated at Harrow School and Trinity College, Cambridge, where the rooms he occupied and a spout he climbed up on to the roof of the library are still shown.

In 1798 his grand-uncle having died, the poet and his mother removed to Newstead, then much dilapidated. In 1799 he went to school to Dr. Glennie, at Dulwich, and thence removed to Harrow. In 1803 he fell desperately in love with Miss Chaworth, being his *third* affair of the heart. In 1807 he left the University of Cambridge without any emotions of regret or gratitude. In 1808 he published "Hours of Idleness: by a Minor." His poems were so severely criticised that he solemnly forswore authorship, but through a friend's influence he was persuaded to publish the "Childe Harold," and "awoke one fine morning to find himself famous." He proposed to Miss Milbanke in September, 1814, and was accepted; this was his second offer to her. Miss Milbanke and Lord Byron were married at Seaham, in the county of Durham, the seat of the lady's father, on the 2nd of January, 1815. Their married life lasted only for a year and a few days (although Mrs. Stowe in her article twice mentions *two* years as the period of the union; and further, she mis-spells Miss Milbanke's name throughout her narrative). Lord Byron, after the separation, left England, and lived for some time in Italy. Whilst there, one of his mistresses was the Countess Guiccioli, whose "Memoirs," recently published, called forth from Mrs. Stowe her defence of Lady Byron's character.

Lord Byron lived at Ravenna; then at Pisa; afterwards at Genoa. He wanted excitement and change, and thought at one time of the South American continent, at another of Spain, but in the end went to Greece, where he behaved with bravery and prudence during the war of insurrection, and where he met his most untimely death.

Lord Byron's short but brilliant career terminated at Missolonghi, in Greece, on the 19th of April, 1824. His

remains were brought to his native country in a vessel called the "Florida," and on being landed were laid in state in the house of Sir Edward Knatchbull, Bart., during Friday and Saturday, the 9th and 10th of July. On the 16th of the same month the poet's remains were, in compliance with his own wish, laid in the family vault beside those of his mother, in the little church of Hucknall, near Newstead. On a white marble tablet in the chancel of the church at Hucknall is the following inscription :—

In the Vault beneath,
Where many of his Ancestors and his Mother are buried,
Lie the remains of
GEORGE GORDON NOEL BYRON,
Lord Byron, of Rochdale, in the county of Lancaster,
The Author of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage."
He was born in London on the 22nd of January, 1788 :
He died at Missolonghi, in Western Greece, on the
19th of April, 1824.
Engaged in the glorious attempt to restore that country to her ancient freedom and renown.

His Sister, the Honourable
AUGUSTA MARIA LEIGH,
Placed this Tablet to his Memory.

THE

STOWE-BYRON CONTROVERSY.

HAVING made the foregoing prefatory remarks, we now plunge *in medias res*, and propose to place before our readers a complete *résumé* of public opinion, as expressed by the leading journals and reviews, upon Mrs. Stowe's communication. It will be necessary to acquaint our readers with the substance of the facts contained in that extraordinary narrative, and also to make some short extracts from the article concerning which all this controversy is going on. We shall endeavour to keep the mean between two extremes in the matter of quotation, for whilst in justice to our readers we must place the important facts of Mrs. Stowe's statement before them, yet in fairness to the proprietors of *Macmillan's Magazine*, we are compelled to make our extracts as brief as possible. Mrs. Stowe's article, which she calls "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," is prefaced by a few remarks from the pen of the editor of *Macmillan*. He says:—

"The following paper, from the pen of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, on Lady Byron's life and relations to Lord Byron, is the first complete and authentic statement of the whole circumstances of that disastrous affair which has been given to the world. Painful and appalling as are the details, the time is come when they can no longer be concealed, This paper is, in fact, Lady Byron's own statement of the reasons which forced her to the separation which she so long resisted, and on which, out of regard for her husband and child, she maintained so religious a silence up to the day of her death."

He goes on to say that a perusal of Mrs. Stowe's narrative will convince the reader that separation from her husband was the only course Lady Byron could pursue, and adds:—

"Towards so pure and lofty a character, *compassion* would

be out of place; but *justice* may be rendered, even after this lapse of time; and it is peculiarly gratifying to the editor of *Macmillan's Magazine* that it should be rendered through these columns."

Mrs. Stowe states that the disclosures which she now makes concerning Lord Byron's married life have been forced from her by the publication and favourable reception given everywhere to the work of the Countess Guiccioli, one of the poet's Italian mistresses. She says, "The story of mistress *versus* wife may be briefly summed up as follows:—

"Lord Byron, the hero of the story, is represented as a human being endowed with every natural charm, gift, and grace, who, by the one false step of an unsuitable marriage, wrecked his whole life. A narrow-minded, cold-hearted precisian, without sufficient intellect to comprehend his genius, or heart to feel for his temptations, formed with him one of those mere worldly marriages, common in high life, and finding that she could not reduce him to the mathematical proprieties and conventional rules of her own mode of life, suddenly and without warning abandoned him in the most cruel and inexplicable manner.

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"For many years after the rupture between Lord Byron and his wife, that poet's personality, fate, and happiness occupied a place in the interests of the civilized world, which we will venture to say was unparalleled."

And Lady Byron was censured at all hands—Wilson, in the character of the Ettrick Shepherd; Moore, in his "Memoirs of Lord Byron;" Madame de Staël; and finally, the Countess Guiccioli, were all arranged against the wife, and enlisted on the side of the husband. But, says Mrs. Stowe:—

"This whole history of Lord and Lady Byron in its reality has long been perfectly understood in many circles in England, but the facts were of a nature that could not be told. While there was a young daughter living, whose future might be prejudiced by its recital, and while there were other persons on whom the disclosure of the real truth would have been crushing as an avalanche, Lady Byron's only course was the perfect silence in which she took refuge, and those sublime works of charity and mercy to which she consecrated her blighted earthly hopes.

"But the time is now come when the truth may be told.

Every actor in the scene has passed from the stage of mortal existence, and passed, let us have faith to hope, into a world where they would desire to expiate their faults by a late publication of the truth.

"No person in England, we think, would as yet take the responsibility of relating the true history which is to clear Lady Byron's memory. But, by a singular concurrence of circumstances, all the facts of the case, in the most undeniable and authentic form, were at one time placed in the hands of the writer of this sketch, leaving to her judgment the use which should be made of them. Had this melancholy history been allowed to sleep, no public use would have been made of this knowledge, but the appearance of a popular attack on the character of Lady Byron calls for a vindication, and the true history of her married life will, therefore, now be related."

The authoress then enlarges, in a rambling and confused style, on the evidence against Lord Byron apart from the revelation made to her personally by Lady Byron, and tries to prove from his poems (quoting the "Don Juan," at length,) that he himself described his feelings towards his wife, therein.

"'There was Miss Millpond, smooth as summer's sea,
That usual paragon, an only daughter,
Who seemed the cream of equanimity
Till skimmed, —and then there was some milk and water,
With a slight shade of blue too, it might be,
Beneath the surface; but what did it matter?
Love's riotous, but marriage should have quiet,
And, being consumptive, live on a milk diet.'

"The result of this intimacy with Miss Milbanke, and this enkindling of his nobler feelings, was an offer of marriage, which she, though at the time deeply interested in him, declined with many expressions of friendship and interest. In fact, she already loved him, but had that doubt of her power to be to him all that a wife should be, which would be likely to arise in a mind so sensitively constituted and so unworldly. They, however, continued a correspondence as friends; on her part the interest continually increased, on his the transient rise of better feelings was choked and overgrown by the thorns of base, unworthy passions.

"From the height which might have made him happy as the husband of a noble woman, he fell into the depths of a secret, adulterous intrigue with a blood relation, so near in con-

sanguinity that discovery must have been utter ruin and expulsion from civilized society.

"From henceforth this damning, guilty secret became the ruling force in his life, holding him with a morbid fascination, yet filling him with remorse and anguish, and insane dread of detection. Two years after his refusal by Miss Milbanke, his various friends, seeing that for some cause he was wretched, pressed a marriage upon him.

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"Marriage was therefore universally recommended and pressed upon Lord Byron by his numerous friends and well-wishers, and so he determined to marry, and, in an hour of reckless desperation, sat down and wrote proposals to one or two ladies. One was declined. The other, which was accepted, was to Miss Milbanke. The world knows well that he had the gift of expression; and those who know his powers in this way will not be surprised that he wrote a very beautiful letter, and that the woman who had already learned to love him, fell at once into the snare.

"Her answer was a frank, outspoken avowal of her love for him, giving herself to him heart and hand. The good in Lord Byron was not so utterly obliterated that he could receive such a letter without emotion, or practice such unfairness on a loving, trusting heart, without pangs of remorse. He had sent the letter in mere recklessness; he had not really, seriously expected to be accepted, and the discovery of the treasure of affection which he had secured was like a vision of a lost heaven to a soul in hell.

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"The most dreadful men to be lived with are those who thus alternate between angel and devil. The buds of hope and love called out by a day or two of sunshine are frozen over and over till the tree is killed.

"But there came an hour of revelation,—an hour when, in a manner which left no kind of room for doubt, Lady Byron saw the full depth of the abyss of infamy which her marriage was expected to cover, and understood that she was expected to be the cloak and the accomplice of this infamy.

"Many women would have been utterly crushed by such a disclosure; some would have fled from him immediately, and exposed and denounced the crime. Lady Byron did neither. When all the hope of womanhood died out of her heart, there arose within her, stronger, purer, and brighter, that immortal

kind of love such as God feels for the sinner,—the love of which Jesus spoke, that makes the one wanderer of more account than the 'ninety and nine that went not astray.' She would neither leave him nor betray him, nor yet would she for one moment justify his sin. And hence came two years of convulsive struggle, in which sometimes, for a while, the good angel seemed to gain the ground, and then the evil one returned with sevenfold vehemence.

"Lord Byron argued his case with himself and with her, with all the sophistries of his powerful mind. He repudiated Christianity as authority, and asserted the right of every human being to follow out what he called 'the impulses of nature.' Subsequently he introduced into one of his dramas the reasoning by which he justified himself in incest.

"She followed him through all sophistical reasonings with a keener reason. She besought and implored, in the name of his better nature, and by all the glorious things that he was capable of being and doing; and she had just power enough to convulse and shake and agonize, but not power enough to subdue.

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"He had tried his strength with her fully. The first attempt had been to make her an accomplice by sophistry; by destroying her faith in Christianity, and confusing her sense of right and wrong, to bring her into the ranks of those convenient women who regard the marriage-tie only as a friendly alliance to cover licence on both sides.

"When her husband described to her the continental latitude,—the good-humoured marriage, in which complaisant couples mutually agree to form the cloak for each other's infidelities,—and gave her to understand that in this way alone she could have a peaceful and friendly life with him, she answered him simply: 'I am too truly your friend to do this.'

"When Lord Byron found that he had to do with one who would not yield, who knew him fully, who could not be blinded and could not be deceived, he determined to rid himself of her altogether."

It was when the state of affairs between Lord and Lady Byron seemed darkest and most hopeless that their only child was born.

"Lord Byron's treatment of his lady during the sensitive period that preceded the birth of this child, and during her confinement, was marked by paroxysms of unmanly brutality,

for which the only charity on her part was the supposition of insanity. Moore sheds a significant light on this period, by telling us that about this time Byron was often drunk day after day with Sheridan. There had been insanity in the family, and this was the plea which Lady Byron's love put in for him. She regarded him as, if not insane, at least so nearly approaching the boundaries of insanity as to be a subject of forbearance and tender pity."

Then very shortly after came their separation, and Mrs. Stowe says the poet was wholly unprepared for the reaction of society against him, consequent upon his wife leaving him.

"It broke up the guilty intrigue, and drove him from England. He had not courage to meet or endure it. The world, to be sure, was very far from suspecting what the truth was, but the tide was setting against him with such vehemence as to make him tremble every hour lest the whole should be known; and henceforth it became a warfare of desperation to make his story good, no matter at whose expense."

The authoress then makes a number of quotations from his poetry published after he left England, especially from the "Manfred." Lady Byron, however, still believed in the "angel in him," and in this angel she had faith.

"It was for the deliverance of this angel from degradation and shame and sin, that she unceasingly prayed. She read every work that he issued,—read it with a deeper knowledge than any human being but herself could possess. The ribaldry and the obscenity and the insults with which he strove to make her ridiculous in the world, fell at her pitying feet unheeded.

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"When he broke away from all this unworthy life to devote himself to a manly enterprise for the redemption of Greece, she thought that she saw the beginning of an answer to her prayers. Even although his last act was to repeat to Lady Blessington the false accusation which made Lady Byron the author of all his errors, she still had hopes, from the one step taken in the right direction.

"In the midst of these hopes came the news of his sudden death. On his death-bed, it is well known that he called his confidential English servant to him, and said to him: 'Go to my wife, and tell her . . . .'

"Here followed twenty minutes of indistinct mutterings, in which the name of his wife, daughter, and sister frequently

occurred. Suddenly he turned and said: 'You will tell her all this—have you written it down?'

"'My Lord,' said his attendant, 'I really have not understood a word you have been saying.'

"'O God!' said the dying man; 'then it is too late!' and he never spoke more.

"When Fletcher returned to London, Lady Byron sent for him, and walked the room in convulsive struggles to repress her tears and sobs, while she over and over again strove to elicit something from him which should enlighten her upon what that last message had been, but in vain; the gates of eternity were shut in her face, and not a word had passed to tell her if he had repented."

This is Mrs. Stowe's version of Lord Byron's last moments; we will supplement it by inserting the account published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Sept. 9.

"It is interesting at the present time to recall the account given of the last moments of Lord Byron by his servant Fletcher. Fletcher says:—

"'Although his lordship did not appear to think his dissolution was so near, I could perceive he was getting weaker every hour, and he even began to have occasional fits of delirium. He afterwards said, 'I now begin to think I am seriously ill; and in case I should be taken off suddenly I wish to give you several directions, which I hope you will be particular in seeing executed.' I answered I would, in case such an event came to pass; but expressed a hope that he would live many years to execute them much better himself than I could. To this my master replied, 'No; it is now nearly over;' and then added, 'I must tell you all without losing a moment.' I then said, 'Shall I go, my lord, and fetch pen, ink, and paper?' 'Oh, my God! no; you will lose too much time, and I have it not to spare, for my time is now short,' said his lordship; and immediately after, 'Now pay attention.' His lordship commenced by saying, 'You will be provided for.' I begged him, however, to proceed with things of more consequence. He then continued, 'Oh, my poor dear child! My dear Ada! My God! could I but have seen her! Give her my blessing—and my dear sister Augusta, and her children; and you will go to Lady Byron and say—tell her everything; you are friends with her.' His lordship appeared to be greatly affected at this moment. Here my master's voice failed him, so that I could

only catch a word at intervals; but he kept muttering something very seriously for some time, and would often raise his voice and say, 'Fletcher, now if you do not execute every direction which I have given you, I will torment you hereafter if possible.' Here I told his lordship, in a state of the greatest perplexity, that I had not understood a word of what he had said; to which he replied, 'Oh, my God! then all is lost, for it is now too late! Can it be possible you have not understood me?' 'No, my lord,' said I; 'but I pray you to try and inform me once more.' 'How can I?' rejoined my master; 'it is now too late, and all is over.' I said, 'Not our will, but God's be done;' and he answered 'Yes, not mine be done, but I will try.' His lordship did indeed make several efforts to speak, but could only repeat two or three words at a time, such as 'My wife! my child, my sister! You know all—you must say all—you know my wishes.' The rest was quite unintelligible.'

"Lord Byron shortly afterwards fell into a lethargy, which ended by death—his last intelligible words being, 'I must sleep now.'"

It appears to us that it is very much to be regretted that Fletcher, his valet, failed to catch the dying words of his master, as doubtless Lord Byron had a communication of an important nature to make.

Mrs. Stowe next proceeds to give an account of her personal connection with the narrative she has deemed it her duty to publish to the world. She says:—

"The writer went and spent a day with Lady Byron alone, and the object of the visit was explained to her. Lady Byron was in such a state of health, that her physicians had warned her that she had very little time to live. She was engaged in those duties and reviews which every thoughtful person finds necessary, who is coming deliberately and with open eyes to the boundaries of this mortal life.

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"Some of Lady Byron's friends had proposed the question to her, *whether she had not a responsibility to society for the truth;* whether *she did right* to allow these writings to gain influence over the popular mind, by giving a silent consent to what she knew to be utter falsehoods.

"As Lady Byron's whole life had been passed in the most heroic self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, the question was now proposed to her, whether one more act of self-denial was not

required of her, before leaving this world—namely, to declare the absolute truth, no matter at what expense to her own feelings.

"For this purpose it was her desire to recount the whole history to a person of another country, and entirely out of the whole sphere of personal and local feelings, which might be supposed to influence those in the country and station in life where the events really happened, in order that she might be helped by such a person's views in making up an opinion as to her own duty.

"The interview had almost the solemnity of a death-bed avowal. Lady Byron recounted the history which has been embodied in this article, and gave to the writer a paper containing a brief memorandum of the whole, with the dates affixed.

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"She went over, with a brief and clear analysis, the history of his whole life as she had thought it out during the lonely musings of her widowhood. She dwelt on the ancestral causes that gave him a nature of exceptionable and dangerous susceptibility."

The whole scene affected Mrs. Stowe very much indeed, she says, and she begged for two or three days to deliberate before forming any opinion. Our readers are aware of the opinion she did form of the merits of the case; and they are also aware that she kept her knowledge and opinion in the secresy of her own heart for some years after Lady Byron's death, until the publication by the Countess Guiccioli of her relations with Lord Byron induced Mrs. Stowe, in justice, as she thought to the memory and fame of the poet's wife, slandered and maligned by his mistress, to make her private information of the "true story of Lady Byron's life" the property of the world. She concludes her story thus:—

"After Lady Byron's death, the writer looked anxiously, hoping to see a memoir of the person whom she considered the most remarkable woman that England has produced in this century. No such memoir has appeared on the part of her friends; and the mistress of Lord Byron has the ear of the public, and is sowing far and wide unworthy slanders, which are eagerly gathered up and read by an undiscriminating community.

"Such is the origin of these remarks, and we hope that all who have read or credited the slanders of the Guiccioli book

will do themselves the justice to read our refutation of them."

This, then, is a summary of the leading facts, and of the most important statements in Mrs. Stowe's article in *Macmillan,* about which so much has been said and written.

We do not think we are dealing unfairly with the proprietors of that magazine in putting before the public these extracts, as they have already appeared in different newspaper articles in a fragmentary form, and all we have done more than has already been done in the matter is to place them before our readers in their proper order, and to make the comments of the different writers upon the subject intelligible. This was absolutely necessary.

From the PALL MALL GAZETTE, *Aug. 27th.*

The new number of *Macmillan's Magazine* contains an article of deep and painful interest, in which Mrs. Beecher Stowe undertakes to explain the mystery of Lady Byron's married life and the cause of her final and absolute separation from her husband. As is well known, Lady Byron refused to make any specific public statement on the subject during her life, or, indeed, any public statement whatever, beyond that wrung from her in defence rather of her parents than of herself by the harsh and ungenerous perversions of Moore's biography. In her brief letter to Moore she said simply that her father and mother had nothing whatever to do with her departure from her husband's roof; that she left him by his own express desire, conveyed in writing, and under the impression that he was insane; that his sanity being attested on evidence she could not doubt, she felt that his conduct rendered it impossible for her to return to him. Indeed, all that she told her family, when imparted to Sir, Samuel Romilly and Dr. Lushington, led her legal advisers to the conclusion that Lord Byron's errors might be condoned and a reconcilliation effected. It was only when, upon Lord Byron's refusal to agree to a separation, Lady Byron herself went to Dr. Lushington, and told him the whole story without reserve, that he assented to her view that "duty to God and man" alike demanded a separation, and declared it to be impossible for him, either professionally or otherwise, to take any part in again bringing together wife and husband after what had taken

place. Lord Byron, for reasons which have been variously construed, was equally vague. While confessing in general terms transgressions on his own part, he endeavoured, at first by innuendo and afterwards more openly, to ascribe his ruin to the "cold treason of the heart," the harsh "fixed rules and principles" of his "moral Clytemnestra." He died with an inarticulate message to his wife upon his lips. Although the drift of opinion has been on the whole against the poet, Lady Byron's nobly patient and pious life exercising a natural influence in her favour, it is obvious that the slender facts which alone were known were capable of very various interpretations, and left abundant scope for controversy of every kind. Macaulay probably summed up the judgment of most impartial men when he said that there was not before the world, substantiated by credible or even by tangible evidence, a single fact indicating that Lord Byron was more to blame than any other man on bad terms with his wife. Lady Byron's legal advisers had no doubt pronounced against her return to her husband, but then they had heard only one side of the story, and, without impugning Lady Byron's veracity, it was not difficult to conceive the possibility of misconception on her part. It cannot be said that the various letters and memoirs which have since been published throw any additional light upon the subject. The Countess of Guiccioli's book is only the special pleading of a mistress for her lover, and the biographies which have been given with the poems have in the main adhered to the line of Moore's defence. Dr. Lushington, till now the only known depository of Lady Byron's disclosures who survives, has always maintained a rigid silence; and it seemed as though the secret would be kept at least for some time longer, if not for ever. For our own part we do not know that if it had never been divulged there would have been any reason for regret. The question is one which might willingly have been let die but for the indiscretion of the poet's admirers, who could not refrain from spreading cruel insinuations and imputations against others in their eagerness to vindicate his character.

In 1856 a cheap edition of Byron's works was in preparation. It was to be accompanied by a biography of the poet, giving the story of his domestic life in the version of his friends. This was brought under Lady Byron's notice, and she was urged by some of her friends to consider "whether she had not a responsibility to society for the truth, and whe-

ther she did right to allow these writings to gain influence over the popular mind by giving a silent consent to what she knew to be utter falsehoods." In her perplexity and embarrassment, Lady Byron bethought her of taking counsel with Mrs. Beecher Stowe, who was then on her second visit to England, and with whom she had previously formed an intimate acquaintance. It was her desire, we are told, to recount the whole history to a person of another country, and entirely out of the whole sphere of personal and local feelings, which might be supposed to influence those in the country and station in life where the events really happened, in order that she might be assisted in determining whether it was her duty to declare the full and absolute truth, at whatever expense to her own feelings. "The interview had almost the solemnity of death-bed avowal." Lady Byron recounted the miserable experiences of her married life, her husband's alternate moods of gentleness and fury, and then the terrible hour of revelation—"an hour when, in a manner which left no kind of room for doubt, she saw the full depth of the abyss of infamy which her marriage was expected to cover, and understood that she was expected to be the cloak and the accomplice of this infamy." Previous to his marriage he had fallen "into the depths of a secret, adulterous intrigue with a blood relation, so near in consanguinity that discovery must have been utter ruin and expulsion from civilized society." Even when Lady Byron knew all she would neither leave nor betray him. Hence two years of passionate convulsive struggle, in which sometimes the good angel seemed for a moment to gain ground, and then the evil one returned with seven-fold vehemence. The wretchedness of this period was attended with perpetual pecuniary troubles. Ten executions for debt were levied in the house, and each time settled by the wife's fortune. "Lord Byron argued his case with himself and her with all the sophistries of his powerful mind," repudiating Christianity as authority, and asserting the right of every human being to follow out what he called the "impulses of nature." Her answer to his corrupting theories of marriage as a friendly alliance to cover licence on both sides was simply, "I am too truly your friend for this." Thus rose in his breast impatience of his wife as a restraint, hatred of her as conscience. The unmanly brutality with which he treated her just before the birth of her child, and afterwards, telling her, for instance, suddenly of her

mother's death—a falsehood invented on the moment—and finally, ordering her departure as soon as she was fit to quit the house, seemed to justify suspicions of his sanity.

"For a long time before this she had seen little of him. On the day of her departure she passed by the door of his room and stopped to caress his favourite spaniel which was lying there; and she confessed to a friend the weakness of feeling, a willingness even to be something as humble as that poor little creature, might she only be allowed to remain and watch over him. She went into the room where he and the partner of his sins were sitting together, and said, 'Byron, I come to say good-bye,' offering at the same time her hand.

"Lord Byron put his hands behind him, retreated to the mantelpiece, and, looking round on the three that stood there, with a sarcastic smile, said, 'When shall we three meet again?'

"Lady Byron answered, 'In heaven, I trust.' And those were her last words to him on earth."

Yet to the last the good woman was full of faith and love. She tended fondly not only her own Ada, but the offspring of this hideous intrigue. Even the partner of her husband's guilt afterwards experienced her gracious and loving influences, and from a death-bed looked to her for help and consolation. In Byron himself she had unshaken faith through all. "How could you love him?" some one asked. "My dear," she said, "there was the angel in him." One day she was sure the angel would conquer. She made allowance for his defects of constitution and training, and especially for his gloomy Calvinistic proclivities, and had no doubt of his repentance and redemption.

Such is the story which Lady Byron confided to Mrs. Stowe, and which the latter now feels bound to publish in answer to calumnies lately revived and multiplied. That we have here the reason which caused Lady Byron to refuse all communication with her husband cannot be doubted, but how far her belief in the story was justified by facts or was a mere hallucination, we are as far from knowing as ever. Dr. Lushington, perhaps, knows more, and some day may choose to tell it

From the TIMES, *Aug. 30th.*

SIR,—That forty-five years after an early death in a foreign country the memory of one of our greatest poets should be at the mercy of Mrs. Beecher Stowe, writing in a monthly magazine, is surely—be the facts what they may—a hard and ungenerous fate.

Lord Byron has been dead near half a century. His wife, against whom no graver charge than that of hardness or narrowness was ever attempted to be brought, is no longer living to modify or corroborate a narrative which she herself always withheld.

Is it fair, is it dignified, in a woman of considerable mark to disturb the slumber of reconciliation in which the public would have gladly acquiesced, and to brand a great defenceless name in the interest of one whose only interest now could be peace? Only the other day our greatest Latin scholar did what in him lay to remove or palliate an old standing blot on the memory of Julius Cæsar. That was a nobler and better task than this latest disturbance of an unquiet grave; a disturbance not called for by justice—for none capable of judging ever doubted that Lady Byron's provocations were great and grievous—and sure not to be successful, for Byron's memory will remain where it was.

That a man should in 1815 have been the villain which we are asked to believe that Byron was, and should then have lived on till 1824, producing what Byron produced between those dates, involves a psychological miracle which it will take a greater than Mrs. Beecher Stowe to confirm. Why can't we say our *Requiescant* once for all, without fidgetting over the troubles of the wife and trying to bring matters right by blasting the poet's name?—Your obedient servant, H. M. M.

The following articles and letters are from the *Times* and other sources, being arranged according to date of publication:

"THE TRUE STORY OF LADY BYRON'S LIFE."

An article under this title, written by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, commences the September number of *Macmillan's Magazine.* It will be read with world-wide interest, for though forty-five years have worn out the spell which once belonged to Byron's verse, though criticism has dealt coldly and calmly with it, rejecting its meretricious sentiment and determining its sterling qualities, the man himself remains much the same as he

was first pictured to us in Moore's biography and Macaulay's brilliant and pathetic essay. To those who cannot rest content with an author's writings, but must concern themselves with his individuality, he is still the *beau ideal* of a poet. He stands out from them all with his handsome face, his susceptible and impetuous temperament, his sorrows and dissipations, his loves and hatreds. Condemned at the bar of opinion as a dissolute man, of violent, uncontrolled passions, his misfortunes to this day have averted judgment; by virtue of them he has, like his predecessor, "the wicked lord," claimed a benefit of clergy, and got off scot free.

There is no doubt that Mrs. Stowe's narrative will owe much of its universal interest to the fact that it gratifies the lowest kind of curiosity; but it was not written and ought not to be read with this end in view. It is a late and necessary act of justice—of justice to the wife, clearing her from the accusations of cold-heartedness and uncharitable prudery made so repeatedly during her life and since her death—and of justice on the husband, destroying at once and for ever the romance which has so long been allowed to drape the falsehood and meanness of his character. Leaving the present revelation out of the question, the fact that those interesting misfortunes which at one time the world delighted to weep over were the natural consequence of the vices of their victim, has all along been clear enough, yet seldom, if ever, has this been boldly insisted on, while in nearly every extant biographical notice of the poet—and their name is legion—his wretchedness has been pleaded in mitigation of his errors. His domestic quarrels have been discussed wherever English poetry is read, and the public, forced reluctantly to take Lady Byron's part, has done so with the worst grace. To blame her was indeed, impossible; but it was easy to pity him; to condole with this genius thrown away on a woman who could not understand him, and paying so dearly for his mistake. Men, and women too, made haste to revile the cold and ungenerous prude, who left her husband to make what wreck he pleased of his life, when by bearing with his faults, as the good wife of a great man ought to bear, she might have saved him from himself, and done the duty she owed no less to the world than to its poet.

The public, however, has had some excuse for its tacit condemnation of the most devoted wife that ever sacrificed herself to an unworthy man, for Lady Byron never uttered a word in her own justification; and it is only now, when she

herself and all those whom the dreaful revelation would overwhelm are in their graves, that it is given to the world. As it is, the seals of it would have remained unbroken, perhaps for ever, were it not for the recent publication by Byron's mistress of a book reviving the old and threadbare calumnies against his wife, and referring his reckless indulgence and miserable life to the despair which took possession of him when he found himself abandoned by the woman on whom he rested his hopes of better things.

Mrs. Stowe states fully her unimpeachable authority for the narrative laid before us. When, as the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," she first came to England she formed a friendship with Lady Byron; crossing the Atlantic a second time, in 1856, this was renewed, and Mrs. Stowe received one day an invitation, in which her friend "indicated that she wished to have some private conversation upon important subjects." Lady Byron, of delicate health for many years, had at that time been warned by her physicians that she had not long to live; she considered that the time had come when her long silence should at last be broken, or when, at least, the means of breaking it should be placed in other hands than her own.

One circumstance which led to her resolve was that a cheap issue of Byron's works was in contemplation; the pathetic but utterly false poetry relating to his domestic misfortunes would, doubtless, greatly aid in circulating it among the masses; and Lady Byron judged that she, knowing the truth, owed a responsibility to the world—that she had no right to allow these writings to gain influence over the popular mind by silently consenting to their utter falsehood. As Mrs. Stowe says, "one last act of self-denial was required of her before leaving this world—namely, to declare the absolute truth, no matter at what expense to her own feelings." Lady Byron recounted to Mrs. Stowe the history embodied in the article now under our notice, and gave her a paper containing a brief memorandum of the whole, with the dates affixed; it comes to us on the simple word of a true woman, and we cannot doubt it, though it tears the last shred of extenuation from Byron's miserable and vicious nature, and dissipates into thin air at once and for ever the halo of romance which still adheres to him.

There are no doubt many, however, who will regret that this narrative was ever published, even for the sake of doing justice to Lady Byron; its revelations are so odious and abhorrent that Mrs. Stowe stands fully in need of the strenuous vindica-

tion she pleads. We understand it was at one time her intention to insert it in the *Atlantic Monthly*, so that, if an English magazine had shrunk from the burden of its first production, at any rate English newspapers would have been constrained to copy it second hand.

Mrs. Stowe commences by noticing the "Guiccioli book," and sums up the narrative of mistress *versus* wife as follows:—

"Lord Byron, the hero of the story, is represented as a human being endowed with every natural charm, gift, and grace, who by the one false step of an unsuitable marriage wrecked his whole life. A narrow-minded, cold-hearted precisian, without sufficient intellect to comprehend his genius, or heart to feel for his temptations, formed with him one of those mere worldly marriages common in high life, and, finding that she could not reduce him to the mathematical proprieties and conventional rules of her own mode of life, suddenly and without warning abandoned him in the most cruel and inexplicable manner. It is alleged that she parted from him in apparent affection and good humour, wrote him a playful, confiding letter upon the way, but, after reaching her father's house, suddenly and without explanation announced to him that she would never see him again; that this sudden abandonment drew down upon him a perfect storm of scandalous stories, which his wife never contradicted, never in any way or shape stating what the exact reasons for her departure had been, and thus silently and quietly giving scope to all the malice of thousands of enemies. The sensitive victim was actually thus driven from England, his home broken up, and he doomed to be a lonely wanderer on foreign shores."

Mrs. Stowe then points out that we have listened to the story as told by Lord Byron's mistress, that in his poems and his letters, and in Moore's notices, we have heard the story as told by Lord Byron himself, and that the heaviest, and, indeed, only, accusation ever made against Lady Byron is that she has not spoken at all, her story has never been told. We are reminded how, all over the world, the poet's family misfortunes were discussed, how his domestic poems, the "Fare thee well," and others, were read and sung with tears (Moore tells us they were written with tears), and Lady Byron was everywhere regarded as "a marble-hearted monster of correctness and morality, a personification of the Law unmitigated by the Gospel." Wilson, the poet, contrasted her cold pharasaic morality with the conjugal fidelity of a Highland

shepherd's wife, who reclaims her drunken husband, and makes a good man of him; and Moore, in the biography, plainly refers Byron's Venetian debaucheries to the "failure of the attempted mediations with Lady Byron."

After having set before us in detail the many contemporary and later constructions and criticisms on Lady Byron's conduct, Mrs. Stowe copies out the letter which Byron wrote to his wife, but which he was prevented from sending, as he told Lady Blessington, "by his despair of its doing any good." Moore prefaced the introduction of this letter into his memoir by remarking, "Few of my readers, I think, will not agree with me in saying that if the author of the following letter had not right on his side, he had at least most of those good feelings which are found to accompany it." Comparing it with the narrative of Lady Byron, Mrs. Stowe honours it as a master-piece of mystification, composed with a view of acting on the sympathies of Lady Blessington and his numerous female admirers. She then quotes for us passages in "Don Juan" which refer to Lady Byron, and having stated the whole case as it was pleaded by the poet and his friends, she lays before us the wife's story, and after half a century the truth is told, and the tender womanly nature of Lady Byron is freed from the aspersions of fifty years. We now proceed to lay before our readers the substance of Mrs. Stowe's painful narrative.

Byron seems at one time to have been really attracted by the spiritual, unworldly nature of his future wife; the exquisite sketch of Aurora Raby, in "Don Juan," represents her as she appeared to him when he first met her in fashionable society, and in it he bears testimony to the charm of her thoughtful, serious, and yet girlish nature, so different to the common type. In the days of their first acquaintance he made her an offer of marriage, and though she refused it they continued a correspondence as friends. On her part, the interest continually increased, but his vicious nature soon broke away from her gentle influence. Mrs. Stowe says:—

"From the heights which might have made him happy as the husband of a noble woman he fell into the depths of a secret, adulterous intrigue with a blood relation, so near in consanguinity that discovery must have been utter ruin and expulsion from civilized society. From henceforth this damning, guilty secret, became the ruling force of his life, holding him with a morbid fascination, yet filling him with remorse and unquiet and insane dread of detection."

Two years after his refusal by Miss Milbanke, his various friends, seeing that for some cause he was wretched, pressed a marriage upon him, and he sat down in a desperate mood and wrote proposals to one or two ladies. Miss Milbanke accepted him; he had sent the letter more as a wild freak than with any serious expectation of a result; however, he was flattered at the answer, and in his letters to his friends about this time he frequently piques himself on his success, complacently mentioning that Miss Milbanke had employed the last two years in refusing five or six of his acquaintance. Mrs. Stowe justly remarks there is a sort of childish levity about these letters very characteristic of the man who skimmed over the deepest abysses with the lightest jest. He visited Miss Milbanke's parents as her accepted lover, she saw that he was unhappy, that some weight rested on his mind which rendered him moody and gloomy, and naturally inferred that he was not happy in his engagement. She spoke to him alone, and frankly told her thoughts, adding that she would, if he so wished it, release him, and they should remain only friends. Overcome with emotion, Byron fainted away. Miss Milbanke understood this as a mark of the depth of his feelings towards her, and spoke no more of the subject.

They were married; it is true that Byron, as he relates in the "Dream," was profoundly agitated, standing at the altar with this young girl whom he was leading to a fate of such certain wretchedness; "but it was not," we quote Mrs. Stowe, "the "memory of Mary Chaworth, but another guiltier and more damning memory that overshadowed that hour." The wedding journey began—a "Devil's Drive." The moment the carriage doors were shut upon the bridegroom and bride the paroxysm of remorse and despair—unrepentant remorse and angry despair—broke forth upon her gentle head. "You might have saved me from this, madam! You had it all in your own power when I offered myself to you first. Then you might have made me what you pleased, but now you will find that you have married a *devil*." They arrived at one of her country seats, where they were to spend the honeymoon. Miss Martineau has sketched the arrival:—

"At the altar she did not know that she was a sacrifice; but before sunset of that winter day she knew it, if a judgment may be formed of her face and attitude of despair when she alighted from the carriage on the afternoon of her marriage-day. It was not the traces of tears which won the sympathy

of the old butler who stood at the open door. The bridegroom jumped out of the carriage and walked away. The bride alighted and came up the steps alone, with a countenance and frame agonised and listless with evident horror and despair."

Lady Byron did not yet know the whole of her wretchedness; she knew from her husband's fierce avowals in the carriage that there was a dreadful secret of guilt, that he had no love to give her; but she had taken him for better for worse, and did not yet give up hope, but set herself bravely to work to soothe, and please, and calm his wild spirit. She did win him over to her a little; she was fitted to be his companion in literary work, she was even his assistant, copying out his poems; it was hard, indeed, if this wife, who had laid not only her love and life, but her princely fortune at her husband's feet, could not at last prevail with him. Sometimes she thought she had softened and subdued him, but again he would break out into a paroxysm of hatred and denunciation, "but there came an hour of revelation,—an hour when, in a manner which left no kind of room for doubt, Lady Byron saw the full depth of the abyss of infamy which her marriage was expected to cover, and understood that she was expected to be the cloak and the accomplice of this infamy." Even now she did not despair; she bore with him, she besought him, but he argued his case with himself and her with all the sophistries of his powerful mind. "He repudiated Christianity as an authority, asserting the right of every human being to follow out what he called the 'impulses of nature.' Subsequently he introduced into one of his dramas the reasoning by which he justified himself in incest."

For two years she endured from him what no woman ever endured from her husband. She resolutely planted herself in the way of his iniquity, insisting that if he went to destruction he should go over her dead body. "When her husband described to her the Continental latitude, the good-humoured marriage in which pleasant couples mutually agree to form the cloak for each other's infidelities, she answered simply, 'I am too truly your friend to do this.'" The spiritual poet, whom half the women of England were in love with, had now determined to rid himself altogether of his wife. He treated her with unmanly brutality, both before and after the birth of her child; on one occasion he went into her room suddenly and told her that her mother was dead—an utter falsehood. A short time after her confinement he wrote her a note saying

that so soon as she was able to travel she must go, that he could not and would not have her any longer about him, and when her child was five weeks old he expelled her from his house. This is the last scene; and the reader must bear in mind that within a few weeks of it he addresses his wife through the printer in that exquisite "Farewell" with which all the world is familiar:—

"On the day of her departure she passed by the door of his room, and stopped to caress his favourite spaniel, which was lying there; and she confessed to a friend the weakness of feeling a willingness even to be something as humble as that poor little creature, might she only be allowed to remain and watch over him. She went into the room where he and the partner of his sins were sitting together, and said, 'Byron, I come to say good-bye,' offering at the same time her hand. Lord Byron put his hands behind him, retreated to the mantel-piece, and looking round on the three that stood there, with a sarcastic smile, said, 'When shall we three meet again?' Lady Byron answered, 'In heaven, I trust.' And those were her last words to him on earth."

Such is the history of Lady Byron's married life; the world will now judge of her conduct, will render her that justice she could at any time have demanded herself, but which, from the noblest and highest motives, she forbore to claim during her life.

The daylight has thus at last streamed in on the stage romance of Lord Byron's life, has struck the thin tinsel and the dirty paint, and now the curtain may be dropped, and the play, still dragging on, put an end to. As far as Lord Byron himself is concerned we do not regret it, the truth is the truth, and we would sooner know him for what he was than take him for what he might have been. Sad it is beyond everything how black a mark is for ever set against some of the most perfect poems—those to his half-sister Augusta—in this our mother tongue; but, horrible as is the crime now divulged, the unutterable meanness of the man is still more despicable. When we learn that the author of "Childe Harold" not only brutally illused his wife and turned her out of his house, but challenged her before the world to say a word against him, well knowing that her noble nature sealed her lips, and that he all the while kept her money, which she had scorned to secure to herself, to be the means of his debaucheries, we almost feel that we can never open his works again.

From the DAILY NEWS, *September 2nd.*

MRS. BEECHER STOWE'S TRUE STORY OF LADY BYRON'S LIFE.

The solicitors to Lady Byron's family protest against the publication of that statement, and on behalf of her family and representatives disclaim all sympathy with it. They declare that it is "not a complete or authentic statement of the facts;" comment on a few inaccuracies it contains, and question both the good taste and the justice of the publication. The letter is one which Mrs. Stowe herself will probably answer, and which it is not for us to answer for her. But pending Mrs. Stowe's reply the public will not fail to notice two or three points in the letter. The solicitors make much of Mrs. Stowe's admission that the statement is made on recollections of a conversation which took place thirteen years ago, and of a manuscript which Lady Byron gave her, which she read under great excitement. But the one or two facts which Lady Byron communicated to Mrs. Stowe are such as a mere statement would indelibly impress on the memory of the most careless person, and to show Mrs. Stowe to be inaccurate in some other small details does nothing towards showing the one great damning revelation to be false. In fact it will be observed that the solicitors do not venture even to hint that it is false; they merely blame Mrs. Stowe for telling it. They say that it is first a breach of trust, and second an ignorant violation of Lady Byron's will. But Mrs. Stowe tells us that Lady Byron told her the story expressly that some one out of her own circle and country should have charge of it; and it is entirely for Mrs. Stowe to decide whether it was told her as an incommunicable secret, or not. We have reason to know that Mrs. Stowe's belief is that it was especially communicated to her to ensure its eventual publication. Nor has Lady Byron's will anything to do with the question. We are told that her MSS. are left by that will to three trustees, to be used as they think best for the interests of the grandchildren, and by no one else. "Mrs. Stowe is not one of these three," say the solicitors, and they argue, therefore, that her paper is "an ignorant violation" of the will, and "an offence against Lady Byron's dying wishes." Now it seems to us that if Mrs. Stowe were one of the three this charge would be justified; as she is not one of the three we fail to see how she has

violated a will in which she is not mentioned, or how a person to whom Lady Byron's dying wishes were not addressed can offend against them. Lady Byron directs that nobody but her trustees shall see her MSS. But nine years before she gave this direction she herself had shown Mrs. Stowe one of those papers, after telling her the facts it contained; and unless Mrs. Stowe was mentioned in the will, and the fact of the mention was communicated to her, she cannot be charged with violating it. It is probable that what Mrs. Stowe has told us is not the whole truth, but it is very probably the truth as far as it goes, and we cannot see that Mrs. Stowe and the editor of *Macmillan* have done anything but make a fair and valuable contribution to the veracity and exactitude of history by making it public. The public has an interest in knowing what the gods of its idolatry are, and when admiration is claimed for geniuses like that of Lord Byron, it is a duty which supersedes questions of taste and feeling to let us know the truth about them.

From the TIMES, *Sept. 2nd.*

SIR,—As the solicitors of the descendants and representatives of the late Lady Noel Byron, for whose family we have acted for upwards of half a century, we request your permission to publish in the columns of the *Times* the following observations relative to an article which has just appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine.*

The article in question is entitled "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," and Mrs. H. B. Stowe is announced to be the writer of it.

Of the paper itself we should probably have abstained from taking any public notice if it had appeared in a less respectable journal than *Macmillan*, or if even in this periodical the authoress had been allowed to tell her story without editorial preface or comment. The editor of *Macmillan*, however, has not only admitted Mrs. Stowe's article, but he has prefixed to it a note in which he authoritatively proclaims to the world that "the paper on Lady Byron's life and relations to Lord Byron is the complete and authentic statement of the whole circumstances of that disastrous affair." Nay, more, "that this paper is, in fact, Lady Byron's own statement of the reasons which forced her to the separation which she so long resisted." Again, the editor states that the contribution of

Mrs. Stowe supplies "evidence at once new and direct" on Lady Byron's history.

We, as the family solicitors, beg most distinctly to state that the article is not "a complete" or "authentic statement" of the facts connected with the separation, that it cannot be regarded as Lady Byron's own statement, and that it does not involve any direct evidence on Lady Byron's history.

Instead of direct evidence, Mrs. Stowe has nothing to communicate but her recollections of a conversation thirteen years ago, and her impressions of a manuscript which she states that Lady Byron at that time gave her to peruse, and which, according to her own showing, she read under very great excitement. These circumstances probably account for several obvious errors into which Mrs. Stowe has fallen, such as assigning two years instead of thirteen months as the period during which Lady Byron resided under the same roof with her husband, and similar inaccuracies, to which, for the present purpose, it is unnecessary to allude.

Without for a moment conceding that Mrs. Stowe's narrative contains a complete account of Lady Byron's relations with her husband, we must protest against it as being professedly—first, a most gross breach of the trust and confidence stated to have been reposed in her; second, as inconsistent with her own recommendation to Lady Byron; and third, as an ignorant violation (at least we shall, in charity, suppose Mrs. Stowe to be ignorant) of the express terms of Lady Byron's last will and testament.

First, as relates to a breach of trust, Mrs. Stowe states that she was consulted in an interview which, to use her own words, "had almost the solemnity of a death-bed," not as to whether she would undertake a relation of Lady Byron's married history, but only as to the policy of publishing such a history at all; secondly, Mrs. Stowe, on her own admission, returned to Lady Byron the brief memorandum paper which had been entrusted to her, with the statement of her opinion that "Lady Byron would be entirely justifiable in leaving the truth to be disclosed after her death, and recommended that all facts necessary should be put in the hands of some persons to be so published;" thirdly, Lady Byron did, by her last will and testament, executed a few days only before her decease, bequeath to three persons as trustees all her manuscripts, to be by them first sealed up, afterwards depo-

sited in a bank in the names of such trustees, and she directed that no one else, however nearly connected with her, should upon any plea whatsoever be allowed to inspect such documents, which the trustees were alone to make use of as they might judge to be best for the interests of her grandchildren. Mrs. Stowe is not one of these three. Her paper is entirely gratuitous and unauthorised. It is, as we have said, not consistent with her own counsel; it is an offence against Lady Byron's dying wishes, and the authoress has written in utter disregard of the feelings of those grandchildren of whom she speaks in a vague, fulsome way, as "some of the best and noblest of mankind."

The appearance of the volumes about Lord Byron by the Countess Guiccioli is alleged by Mrs. Stowe as the main reason which induced her to publish her story; but if Lady Byron's descendants, her personal and trusted friends in this country, suffer the slanders of the Countess Guiccioli to pass uncontradicted—for, to use Mrs. Stowe's own expression, of what value was the outcry of "the mistress" against the wife?—their silence should surely have led Mrs. Stowe to hesitate before giving to the world a statement which, however it may affect the memories of the dead, must inevitably inflict pain on the living.

"Lady Byron's own statement" is in the possession of those who love her memory too well to make a rash use of it, and if the world is ever to learn the true story of Lady Byron's life, it will learn it from them.

It would have been in better taste if Mrs. Stowe and the Editor of *Macmillan's Magazine* had imitated the "religious silence" which the latter so much commends in the case of Lady Byron. Meanwhile, Lady Byron's descendants and representatives entirely and absolutely disclaim all countenance of Mrs. Stowe's article, which has been published without their privity or consent.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

WHARTON AND FORDS.

8, Lincoln's-inn-fields, Sept. 1.

Sir,—In justice to those who are dead and cannot speak for themselves, the public ought to pause before it accepts the statement of what Mrs. Stowe calls the "true story" of Lord Byron's married life. Whether, if it be true, it was wise or right to bring it into general notice, is a question on which I

will not enter. But is it true, or is it even *vraisemblable?* At present, be it remembered, we know nothing about the nature of that written document which Mrs. Stowe professes to have received from Lady Byron. It may contain some evidence of the incestuous intrigue with which Byron is charged; it may simply express suspicion, conceived at the time, or even, perhaps, long afterwards. Awaiting further information on this head, let us look at the probability of the story as it stands. Mrs. Stowe asks us to believe that Lord Byron married his wife for the purpose of "cloaking the infamy" in which he was living, and that he "expected" her to concur in this arrangement. If that was so he had everything to lose and nothing to gain by "expelling" her from his house, as Mrs. Stowe calls it, when he found that the expectation was not realised. Again, as Lady Byron was thus "expelled," we are asked to believe that she was willing to remain under the same roof with her husband and his paramour, although she had been long before (Mrs. Stowe's "two years" may serve as a proof of the careless manner in which the story is told) apprised of the guilty relations between them. Further, Mrs. Stowe has herself quoted Lady Byron's letter to Moore, in which she says that before quitting her husband's home she consulted Dr. Baillie on the question of his sanity, and that "with the concurrence of his family." Who were the persons thus taken into Lady Byron's confidence? Lord Byron had but one near relation living, and it would be false delicacy to ignore the fact that she is the person pointed at by Mrs. Stowe's scandal. Lastly, though it might be just credible that a wife who had endured so much should, on being "driven from" her home, seek out the guilty pair (as Mrs. Stowe describes) for the purpose of saying good-bye to them, is it possible that she should have consented (for it must be presumed that she did consent) to her child being named after the lady in question? That is a fact in the case of which Mrs. Stowe has taken no notice.

If, however, Lady Byron did not know of the intrigue before she left her husband, Mrs. Stowe's whole story breaks down. I am aware that the scandal has been long whispered about, it is probable that it would come to Lady Byron's ears, and possible that she attached some importance to it. She may have said as much to Mrs. Stowe, and the memorandum which she placed in that lady's hands may be nothing more than the recollection of her married life, as bearing perhaps on the first

suspicion that had been whispered in her ear. If it contained anything in the shape of proof, it is marvellous that it should have been concealed all these years; still more marvellous that it should at this period have been placed at the disposal of a literary lady accustomed to write for periodicals. Assuming that there was not a tittle of foundation for the charge (and, as yet, we have no evidence of any), we may, perhaps, guess how it arose. On the separation, Lord Byron went abroad, and the first work which he wrote was "Manfred." Mrs. Stowe says that no one can read "Manfred" without perceiving that her story is true. I confess that I draw an inference directly opposite. Mrs. Stowe asserts that Lord Byron's mind was agitated by an "insane dread of detection," and yet she would have us suppose that he took the first opportunity of suggesting to the public mind the crime which he had committed, and that at the very moment when all the gossip of England was on the *qui vive* in speculating about the causes of separation. It is almost impossible that a man with such a secret on his soul should have written "Manfred" at this time. It is easy to understand how, in fact, he came to write this poem. It was the time in which he was most at war with himself and with the world, and the gloomy mood of Manfred was a reflex of his own feelings. He could not better express that mood than by imagining some dark sin in Manfred's past life. At this time his intimacy with Shelley had commenced, and it was one of Shelley's fancies that the list of forbidden degrees of consanguinity in marriage had no foundation in nature, but was simply a device of priests to restrain human liberty. On this idea the original plot of the "Revolt of Islam" (which Shelley published two years afterwards) was based. Now, it is likely enough that Shelley's conversation, which may perhaps have borne reference to the argument of his coming poem, suggested to Byron's mind the circumstance of Manfred's story; and it is not unnatural that some people on reading it should fancy that they saw a clue to the unrevealed story of his matrimonial troubles.

I say nothing about the matter, more or less irrelevant to the main question, which Mrs. Stowe has put together with the view of blackening Byron's memory. If ever man left the impress of every attribute of his being on his works, it was Byron; and no one who has examined his character as thus revealed can suppose him guilty of the calculating meanness which Mrs. Stowe imputes to him respecting the alleged

fabrication of the letter to Lady Byron, and other circumstances discussed in the article.

C. G. P.

Carlton Club, Aug. 31.

From the TIMES, *Sept. 3rd.*

No one can wonder either at the sensation produced by the story which Mrs. Beecher Stowe has just published of Lady Byron's estrangement from her husband, or at the general reluctance to admit its correctness. What Macaulay wrote nearly forty years ago on the difficulty of separating Lord Byron's personal from his literary character is almost as applicable now as it was then. To begin with, there are many still living who themselves felt all the force of the "Byron fever" when it was at its height, and whose romantic devotion to their idol was such as perhaps no other writer has ever inspired; and even those of us who belong to a later age, and who know the author of "Childe Harold" and "Don Juan" only in his works, are nevertheless also to a great extent under the same spell which exercised so strange an influence over our fathers, and made it impossible for cool-headed, clear-sighted critics like Macaulay to separate the author from the man. Perhaps the infection has not yet had time to die out; the fever may have got so thoroughly into the blood of the poet's contemporaries that they transmitted it as an inheritance to their sons; or it may possibly be that Lord Byron has so identified and mixed himself up with what he wrote, his morbid yet not ungraceful egotism so penetrates and inspires many of his loftiest utterances, that admiration for them is naturally accompanied by a sort of personal regard for him. Whatever may be the cause, there can be no doubt of the fact that Byron's personal character is still viewed by most of us with an affectionate regard almost ludicrously out of proportion to its real merits. It is strange enough that his profligacy, considering its grossness and audacity, should have been by a British public treated so leniently; but still it must, we fear, be confessed that as the world's heroes go, profligacy itself can scarcely be considered incompatible with the heroic. But it certainly is passing strange that what we may call the smaller, weaker parts of Byron's character—his childish vanity and taste for stage tricks, his womanish petulance and sensitiveness, the unutterable meanness of his money dealings with his wife—

should not long since have dethroned him from the position of popular idol to which his literary success raised him. It is by no means creditable to us as a nation that such a man as Byron should so long have been one of its favourite heroes; and though his genius must command admiration while the English language lasts, his character will, we feel sure, come, before long, to be regarded with feelings very different from those with which nine out of ten Englishmen regard it now. Its present hold, however, upon the nation is beyond dispute, and no one can feel surprised that Mrs. Beecher Stowe's curious revelation should be by many resented and refused all credence, not upon its own merits or with any consideration of its intrinsic claims to probability, but simply because it throws discredit upon so popular a name.

We have already stated our opinion that Mrs. Beecher Stowe is faithfully reproducing what she learned on such high authority as that of Lady Byron herself, and we cannot say that this opinion is shaken by the letter from Messrs. Wharton and Ford, which we published yesterday. These gentlemen, as having acted "for upwards of half a century as solicitors to Lady Byron's family," may no doubt claim to speak with considerable weight upon any subject connected with Lady Byron's domestic affairs. It seems that the subject now under discussion was not kept strictly secret within her own breast, but was imparted to certain advisers, and even committed formally to paper, and under these circumstances few would, perhaps, be so likely to learn, either directly or indirectly, a correct history of it as the family lawyers. Besides, we need scarcely express our belief that Messrs. Wharton and Ford would not come forward in the matter as they have done unless they had ample grounds for doing so. If, therefore, they distinctly contradicted Mrs. Stowe's assertion, we confess we should be inclined to prefer their evidence to hers, as the more likely to be accurate. But for these very reasons it seems to us a most significant fact that, though thus coming forward apparently in direct opposition to Mrs. Stowe, and manifesting the greatest anxiety to discredit her story, Messrs. Wharton and Ford do not, nevertheless, altogether contradict it. They do not say, as they would naturally be glad to say at once if they could, that Mrs. Stowe's story is in the only important respect incorrect—that Lady Byron never imputed to her husband the criminality now for the first time revealed to the world; but they only deny that Mrs. Stowe's statement is

"complete" or "authentic," and that it "can be regarded as Lady Byron's own statement." Both these denials seem to us quite compatible with the not improbable supposition that Mrs. Stowe, though giving in the main a correct version of "Lady Byron's statement," has in points of detail—such, for instance, as the "two years" with Byron—so altered it as to make it her own. Nor is it quite fair of Messrs. Wharton and Ford to argue that Mrs. Stowe's evidence is not "direct," or that she may have misunderstood the manuscript given her, as, "according to her own showing, she read it under very great excitement." It is difficult to see what could be more "direct evidence" on a question of this kind than a statement from Lady Byron's own lips; and, as regards the second objection, it is enough to mention that Mrs. Stowe had the manuscript with her two days, having asked permission to take it away, simply because when it was first handed to her she was too much overcome to form a calm judument on it. Under such circumstances, it is impossible to suppose that Mrs. Stowe could at the time have misunderstood or have afterwards forgotten the substantial part of Lady Byron's statement. It was of a kind to fix itself indelibly upon the hearer's mind, even had it been conveyed in one hurried whisper; but, as it was, it was communicated both orally and by a formal document; it was thought over for days, and it was then again discussed.

While, however, we see no possibility of Mrs. Stowe's having misapprehended Lady Byron, we think it perfectly possible—and, indeed, probable—that Lady Byron was herself the victim of a delusion,—that she wrongly suspected her husband of the crime with which she charged him. We can find nothing in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's elaborate story of the whole case at all incompatible with this hypothesis; on the contrary, she now and then unintentionally confirms it. Great stress is laid, for instance, upon Byron's advocacy of the "Continental latitude—the good-humoured marriage in which complaisant couples mutually agree to form the cloak for each other's infidelities," and this is practically treated as the main cause of his wife's inability to get on harmoniously with him. All this may be perfectly true, but surely it is not the sort of language in which Byron would describe the grave crime of which she suspected him. No amount of "Continental latitude" or "complaisance for mutual infidelities" would be advanced as a plea for "incest." Byron would have used very

different arguments had he wanted to justify such a sin, and we in vain search Mrs. Stowe's history of Lady Byron's case to see what arguments he actually used, or what he expressly said or did to confirm the suspicion of his guilt. We can only find vague expressions, which may mean nothing more than that Lady Byron was herself fully convinced of it. This fact is no doubt in itself startling enough, but it becomes less so when we remember that she thought her husband insane. Insanity would account for even such sin as she imputed to him, while all that he said to her about "Continental latitude" —in itself enough to horrify a woman of her pure mind—might appear, when judged in the light of her suspicion, a defence not only of adultery, but of even worse. We cannot, indeed, conjecture how Lady Byron first came to entertain the suspicion—upon this point we have before us no evidence—but we can easily understand how, having once got hold of it, she contrived first to impose upon herself and then upon Mrs. Stowe. She would only have been doing what thousands of unhappy wives have done before, except that the guilt to which her unjust suspicions pointed was of exceptional enormity; but this fact, as we have said, is quite accounted for by her doubts as to her husband's sanity, and by the very low opinion which his own unblushing confessions may have led her to form of his morality.

The *Saturday Review* of September 4th thus deals with the question:—

The great Byron mystery has been revealed on authority which, not so much by reason of any confidence which we give to the authenticator of the history as on the intrinsic and internal evidence of the history itself, we are compelled, though not without some natural misgiving and reluctance, to accept. Mrs. Beecher Stowe tells us her ghastly story in the pages of *Macmillan's Magazine*, the editor of which congratulates himself upon being selected as the organ of gratifying the curiosity and interest of the world. We envy neither this gentleman nor his contributor their very peculiar topics of congratulation.

We shall not be at the trouble of giving an abstract or abridgment of Mrs. Stowe's story. Not one of our readers can be ignorant of its substance, which is that the cause of the separation of Lord and Lady Byron was the discovery by the wife of an adulterous and incestuous connexion existing

between her husband and the only woman in the world with whom he could commit that crime. Her position towards Lord Byron was as that of Tamar to her half-brother Amnon. Mrs. Stowe tells us "that the whole history of Lord and Lady Byron in its reality has long been perfectly understood in many circles in England." Mrs. Stowe always writes in a loose, careless, inaccurate way, and in this instance she moreover indulges in very bad taste in telling her story. But we take the liberty of doubting this particular assertion. Perhaps a score of hideous tales were invented as the real history of Lord and Lady Byron, at the time of the separation; and we cannot say that Mrs. Stowe's version was not one among many. We are sorry to say that we believe it to be the true one. But that it has long been known, or generally or even specially known in well-informed or any other "circles," we doubt. The very first time it was ever announced in print was three months before Mrs. Stowe's publication. In an able and interesting paper published in the *Temple Bar Magazine* of June last on "Lord Byron's Married Life," as far as we know this crime of incest was first publicly charged on Lord Byron, and we are bound to say that that article, remarkable for ability, good taste, and right feeling, has had far more effect in compelling us to the conclusion that this is the true solution of the mystery than Mrs. Stowe's very unpleasant narrative, or any confidence which we repose in a writer so inaccurate, and in other ways so positively repellant, as the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Again, we say, we accept this version, not on account of the external evidence which is brought to support it, so much as on its internal probability.

And, first, we will endeavour to explain why our first impressions were against the authoritative disclosure published in *Macmillan's Magazine*. Mrs. Stowe says, in substance, that Lady Byron was the most Christ-like person whom this later world has seen; that her whole object in life, between the years 1816 and 1860, was, with one exception made in the person of Mrs. Stowe, to keep to herself the great and dreadful secret of her life; that in spite of every taunt, challenge, insult, and provocation on her husband's part, Lady Byron maintained an inflexible silence during his life; that after his death the "intense faithfulness and love to her husband which survived private wrongs of the deepest kind" —to use the sentimental talk of the editor of *Macmillan's*

Magazine—still compelled her to bear any misconstructions and misrepresentations rather than divulge the hideous truth. This conduct Lady Byron justified to herself on various grounds; some of them creditable, some nearly unintelligible, or at most of very doubtful obligation, and some to which, as far as we can make out, any publication of the story under any circumstances is utterly opposed. If, as Mrs. Stowe tells us, one of Lady Byron's motives for screening her husband and sparing his memory was that she believed in his ultimate salvation, and that the good angel would in the long run and in the next world expel the devil, we should say that this practical application of the Universalist doctrine, which it is well known Lady Byron after her youth adopted, establishes a reason which, though we do not profess quite to understand its force, is as good now in 1869 as Lady Byron found it to be up to 1856—indeed to the day of her death in 1860. If again it was only to spare the feelings of Ada Lady Lovelace that her mother, Lady Byron, was so long and so mercifully silent, her daughter's death in 1852 removed this reason. Again, when we are told that "while there were other persons [living] on whom the disclosure of the real truth would have been crushing as an avalanche, Lady Byron's only course was the perfect silence in which she took refuge," we must remember that, as early as 1851, the year before Lady Lovelace's death, the person who would have been most compromised by any disclosure had died. The fact remains that, from 1816 to 1860, Lady Byron never gave this revelation to the world, nor commissioned any one else to give it. Moore's Memoir was published in 1830. Lady Byron on its publication corrected, explained, and vindicated herself on certain not very material points; but the truth—that is, the whole truth—she still declined to make publicly known. But twenty-six years afterwards, in 1856, four years before her death, and with her faculties not what they were, Lady Byron made Mrs. Stowe's acquaintance. There was then an intention to publish a cheap edition of Byron's works; and Mrs. Stowe tells us that this circumstance induced some friends, whose names are not mentioned, but who we are to suppose were privy to the whole history, to urge Lady Byron to give her real version of her sad married life. We can hardly make head or tail of Mrs. Stowe's vague and irrelevant story, but she asks us to believe that Lady Byron partly assented and partly declined to make this revelation. "It was her desire

to recount the whole history to a person of another country, and entirely out of the whole sphere of personal and local feelings . . . in order that she might be helped by such a person's views in making up an opinion as to her own duty." The person selected by Lady Byron for this purpose was Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and into her hands was placed a paper composed by Lady Byron, "containing a brief memorandum of the whole, with the dates affixed." We pass by the obvious objection that to choose Mrs. Beecher Stowe for her confidante and oracle can only be accounted for by the fact that Lady Byron was in extreme old age; and again that Mrs. Beecher Stowe got into Lady Byron's intimate confidence, and was made the depositary of a secret which had so religiously and for such religious reasons been concealed from the very best and highest people in England, only increases our admiration of, or wonder at Mrs. Stowe's very remarkable and peculiar qualities for recommending herself to great folks. According to her own account, Mrs. Stowe advised her noble friend that while this great "act of justice did seem to be called for, and to be in some respects most desirable, yet Lady Byron would be certainly justifiable in leaving the truth to be disclosed after her death," ending with a recommendation "that all the facts necessary should be put into the hands of *some persons* to be published after Lady Byron's death."

Now it is obvious to remark that, on Mrs. Beecher Stowe's own showing, Lady Byron never commissioned Mrs. Beecher Stowe, either before her death or after her death, to give to the whole world this loathsome revelation, or to write an article on the Byron mystery in *Macmillan's Magazine*, or the *Atlantic Monthly*; that Mrs. Stowe has not produced Lady Byron's written memorandum, but only her own sensational amplification of it; and that, if Lady Byron acceded—and we have now a good reason for supposing that she did accede—to Mrs. Stowe's own suggestion that "the facts should be put into the hands of *some persons*" for publication, this intention of Lady Byron's is rather strangely carried out by their publication by one person, and that person Mrs. Stowe, and in this very grotesque form. Lady Byron's solicitors have just told us that the very course recommended by Mrs. Stowe was adopted by Lady Byron, who, in her will, executed shortly before her death, entrusted her papers to certain trustees, thereby excluding every other person than those trustees—Mrs. Beecher

Stowe included—from making any use, public or private, of the great secret of her life.

Mrs. Beecher Stowe, however, finds or feigns an immediate vindication for her contribution to *Macmillan's Magazine*. That miserable book, the Countess Guiccioli's Memoirs, she says, "sells rapidly, and appears to meet with universal favour," and utterly misrepresents the truth. We differ, except in the last point, from Mrs. Beecher Stowe, If the Guiccioli book is popular in America we are sorry for American taste; in Europe, we can assure her, it has only met with contempt, disgust, and aversion. Its barefaced impropriety has done nothing but injure Byron even in the eyes of those who, unlike their fathers, have never been fascinated by his genius or dazzled by his popularity. The fact is this, that Mrs. Stowe could not keep the great secret confidentially entrusted to her, and was bursting for an opportunity to tell it, as much for the purpose of reviving our interest in herself and of being the first to tell a horrible story, as of vindicating the memory of one who in the eyes of right-minded people wanted no vindicator. So she has told her ugly tale with great inaccuracy and carelessness, in the worst possible taste, for a reason which, if true, is quite inadequate to the occasion; and, further, as far as we can make out, without the slightest justification arising from any request on Lady Byron's part. Stripped of its verbiage and sensationalism, Mrs. Stowe's authentication and authority amounts to this:—That Lady Byron told her a certain history, and gave her a memorandum of certain facts in 1856, asking for Mrs. Stowe's opinion whether they should be then and there published by Lady Byron for a certain reason in 1856. Mrs. Stowe advised against the publication in 1856; and now in 1869, thirteen years afterwards, and nine years after Lady Byron's death, Mrs. Stowe publishes this history, authorized and empowered and commissioned to do so by—Mrs. Beecher Stowe.

We have charged Mrs. Stowe with inaccuracy. She is not even at the trouble of ascertaining Lady Byron's maiden name, which she spells "Millbank." Again, she says that Lady Byron's married life consisted of "two years of convulsive struggle," &c. Lady Byron was married on January 2, 1815, and separated from her husband in January, 1816. Again, Mrs. Stowe says "that a short time after her confinement Lady Byron was informed by her husband, in a note, that as soon as she was able to travel she must go, *that he could not*

and would not longer have her about him." Lady Byron herself, writing to Moore, only says, "Lord Byron has signified to me, in writing, his absolute desire that I should leave London on the earliest day that I could conveniently fix," which he might perhaps well do, considering that his house was full of executions. But Lady Byron herself never says a word about the brutal "could not and would not have her about him." Again; how does Mrs. Stowe, or we may ask how could Lady Byron herself, reconcile the assertion that after the discovery of the incest Lady Byron "would neither leave him nor betray him" with the fact, a most indisputable one, that Lady Byron made the first use of her liberty in consulting the lawyers and doctors—a very proper step—and in dictating and compelling a separation which, as the writer in *Temple Bar* observes, Lord Byron resisted as long as he could?

We proceed to the question, What is gained by this revelation given to the world by Mrs. Beecher Stowe? Lord Byron's fame and influence have passed away. Lady Byron was long ago vindicated. We knew quite enough when we knew that there was something unspeakably bad and wicked which was the real cause of the separation; and we wanted to know no more. The world is generally just enough in its final judgments; Byron's poetry has suffered, many think, undue depreciation, because by a natural instinct we all knew that he was ineffably vile and vicious. Moore's silly and improper book imposed upon nobody; even Macaulay's vindication was viewed as his one critical blunder; the Countess Guiccioli's nasty book has done her hero more harm than good. In a word, is the world one bit better for having its curiosity sated by the revelation of this tragic tale of incest and adultery? We could quite understand the other alternative. Had Lady Byron fifty-three years ago, in the interests of religion and morality, denounced her wretched husband—had she, in order to avert the baleful influence which his specious and debasing poetry was exercising over the minds of the susceptible in the days when the Corsair and Parisina and Don Juan were evil household words—had she, in the eternal interests of right and truth, branded her wicked lord with his incest and adultery, she would, in our judgment, have done a service to society. But now the interest in Lord Byron is much as our interest in the sins of Œdipus or Biblis and Caunus. A morbid and vulgar curiosity is slaked, and slaked

with a baleful beverage. It is true that the name of Byron will be a hissing and scorn to all generations; but if this is a gain to the world, it is to be regretted that the last generation, who suffered most by Byron's popularity, was deprived of this antidote to his poisonous influence. Southey's ghost will probably rejoice that there existed so true a justification, though unknown to him, of his phrase of the Satanic school. But we are not so sure that some foolish people among ourselves may not be misled by Lady Byron's amiable sophistry that her husband after all was half an angel, even though she has left ample proof that he was a fierce and unmitigated "devil"—to use his own description of himself.

A single word more on this part of the subject. The duty suggested by her friends to Lady Byron in 1856 was specific. Mrs. Stowe thus describes it:—"One last act of self-denial was required of her before leaving the world—namely, to declare the absolute truth, no matter at what expense to her own feelings." Whether this advice was sound or not is immaterial; but here was a special issue placed before Lady Byron, and she declined to take it. That issue was that she, Lady Byron, and she alone, and in her own person, was to make the revelation on her own part, and voluntarily. This is one thing, and a thing, whether right or wrong, very different from what has taken place—namely, a revelation made, not by Lady Byron, but by Mrs. Stowe, who never had the least authority to make it. We may say even more than this. Lady Byron gave Mrs. Stowe a certain paper, containing certain facts and details. Had Mrs. Stowe published this we should have had something authentic, at least as far as Lady Byron is concerned. This paper Mrs. Stowe has not published; and whatever the value of the article is, it is not Lady Byron's story. It is exactly and precisely not that which the editor of *Macmillan* describes it, "Lady Byron's own statement;" it is not "an authentic statement." It is only Mrs. Stowe's version of what she says Lady Byron told her some thirteen or fourteen years ago. Its publication, as we have said, is contrary to the spirit and letter of the advice which Mrs. Stowe herself, according to her own account, tendered to Lady Byron in 1856; and, which is most important, Lady Byron's solicitors not only protest in the strongest terms against Mrs. Stowe's conduct as painful and distressing to Lady Byron's grandchildren, and as a gross breach of taste, but as a breach of trust of the gravest

description, and they indignantly denounce her conduct in a publication which is simply scandalous. In this denunciation we heartily concur.

The more important matter, however, remains. Mrs. Beecher Stowe may have been guilty of bad taste, may have been influenced by low motives, may have acted without authority or even in breach of faith in telling the tale as and where she has told it, may have blundered in telling it, may have failed in establishing its authenticity, may have produced insufficient evidence for it; and after all the tale itself might possibly, depending as it does solely on Lady Byron's assertion, be an hallucination to which women at the time of childbirth are occasionally subject; but the question remains—Is the story, through whatever unpleasant channel it reaches us, true? Have we got the solution of the great mystery? For the truth of the story is quite independent of the particular form, which is unsatisfactory enough, in which we receive it. As we have already hinted, we think, though we think it with reluctance, that the balance of probability is on the whole much in its favour. It is intrinsically probable, and something more than probable, not only from internal evidence but from the whole cloud of small corroborative external details, not one of which perhaps is in itself conclusive, but the cumulative force of which taken together seems to be irresistible. The argument is of a critical nature, and, though possibly weak in this or that single link, becomes very impressive from the multitude of indirect and casual illustrations and slight confirmations of which it is capable. Lord Byron was an only child; his half-sister Augusta Maria was an only child, and her mother was a *divorcée*. It is stated by Moore that the brother and sister seldom. perhaps scarcely ever, met in early life. Augusta was born in 1783 or 1784, her mother, Lady Carnarvon, dying in the year of her birth; Byron was born in 1788. In 1807 Augusta Maria Byron married Colonel Leigh. It was in 1813 that Byron made his first offer to Miss Millbanke. According to Moore's Memoirs it was about March, 1814, that Augusta Leigh's name first occurs in Byron's Correspondence, and in the fragmentary diary which he begun in November, 1813, and destroyed in some violent fit of some sort of passion, in April, 1814, concluding it with a frenzied passage, of which the last words are, "O fool! I shall go mad." On September 15, 1814, he made his second offer to Miss Millbanke; was accepted; married January 2, 1815,

and the crash came in January, 1816. Now, according to Lady Byron—or rather from Lord Byron's own avowal, as quoted by Lady Byron in Mrs. Stowe's narrative (*Macmillan*, p. 386)—it was in the interval between his first and second proposals to Miss Millbanke that the great sin of his life was committed; that is, at some time in the year 1814, and the period covered by his fragmentary diary; probably in the spring or summer of 1814. Byron on his wedding-day is reported by Mrs. Stowe and Lady Byron to have said to his bride:—

"You might have saved me from this, Madam! you had it all in your own power when I offered myself to you first. Then you might have made me what you pleased: but now you will find that you have married a *devil*."

This can but mean that he had lately become a devil, and that this diabolical transformation occurred soon after, or, as he wished to infer, because Miss Millbanke had rejected him. Mrs. Stowe herself fixes this date. He made an offer of marriage to Miss Millbanke. . . . . they continued a correspondence . . . . from the height which might have made him happy as the husband of a noble woman, he fell into the depths of a secret adulterous intrigue with a blood relation, so near in consanguinity, &c. . . . . from henceforth this damning guilty secret became the ruling force in his life, holding him with a morbid fascination, yet filling him with remorse and anguish, and insane dread of detection. Two years after his refusal by Miss Millbank [it was less than two years, and the lady's name, as everybody but Mrs. Stowe knows, was Millbanke], his various friends, seeing that for some cause he was wretched, pressed a marriage upon him. The rest requires no repetition.

We have gone through Moore's Memoirs relating to this period, 1813—1815, and it is unquestionable and undeniable that it affords great corroboration to Mrs. Stowe's—or Lady Byron's—narrative. Byron's life up to that time had been bad enough; but now there appears something secret, mysterious, and hidden, a frequent reference to some especial guilt and agony, which shows that something had happened very different from all that had happened before; some guilt different in kind from the unclean and coarse and drunken life of the previous years. It is not so much on what Byron says, as on what he hints, that we found this judgment. There is, we all know, in cases of great sin a strange, unnatural, or

perhaps natural, dallying and playing round the fatal secret. It is concealed perhaps, but it is always on the very point of being revealed, as though, which is perhaps true, there were some horrid fascination in crime which all but compels the criminal to avow it. Read by the lurid light of Mrs. Stowe's narrative, what Byron said in his letters to Moore at this time, what he inserted in his Diary, and the poems which he wrote, become of the highest interest and significance.

Some passages from Moore's book we extract. The very first mention of Augusta Leigh occurs in the Diary:—

"March 22, 1814. She is a friend of Augusta's, and whatever she loves I can't help liking. March 28. Augusta wants me to make it up with Carlisle. I have refused *every* [*sic*] body else, but I can't deny her anything; so I must e'en do it. April 10. I do not know that I am happiest when alone; but this I am sure of, that I never am long in the society even of *her* I love (God knows too well, and the devil probably too) without a yearning for the company of my lamp."

And a week afterwards the journal was discontinued. We turn to the correspondence with Moore:—

"Feb. 4, 1814. Mrs. Leigh is with me at Newstead. March 3 [after returning to London]. I have a great mind to tell you that I *am* uncomfortable, if only to make you come to town . . . there is no one to whom I would sooner turn for consolation . . . The truth is, I have no lack of argument to ponder upon of the most gloomy description, but this comes from *other* causes. . . . There is nothing upon the spot either to love or to hate, but I certainly have subjects for both at no very great distance. . . . March 12. Guess darkly. . . . At present I shall say no more, and, perhaps—but no matter. April 9. I have more or less been breaking a few of the favourite commandments; but I mean to pull up and marry—if any one will have me."

At this moment Byron declared a sudden resolution, which, however, he did not keep, never to write again; and from other notices, the exchange of books and letters, we find that he was in daily communication with his half-sister. May 4, he sends Moore a song, which, by the way, was never published till after his death, which seems at this time significant:—

"I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name,
There is grief in the sound, there is guilt in the fame;
* * * * *

Too brief for our passion, too long for our peace
Were those hours—can their joy or their bitterness cease
We repent—we abjure—we will break from our chain,
We will part—we will fly—to unite it again!
Oh! thine be the gladness and mine be the guilt."
&c. &c. &c.

As we have said, not one of these expressions is conclusive, but taken together they become important.

We now come to the separation. Passing over the brief year of married life, Lady Byron's conduct, as we have all along known it, her consultation with Dr. Baillie, Sir Samuel Romilly, and Dr. Lushington, are familiar to everybody. Dr. Lushington, who had at first thought a reconciliation probable, on further information communicated by Lady Byron, altered his opinion, declared it to be "impossible, and added that if such an idea should be entertained, he could not, professionally or otherwise, take any part towards effecting it." The writer in *Temple Bar*, to whose acute paper, published three months before Mrs. Stowe's, we have already done justice, argues with great force that whatever the offence in Lord Byron's case was, it must have been in the eyes of this great ecclesiastical lawyer equivalent to that which the House of Lords had in a celebrated judgment declared to be of such an aggravated nature that "duty to God and man" made reconciliation impossible. That offence was incest. No doubt it may be argued that all that Dr. Lushington had to guide him in coming to this conclusion was Lady Byron's own unsupported assertion. This is quite true, and the question narrows itself to this, on which everybody must form their own conclusions. Was Lady Byron's revelation to Dr. Lushington a mere crazy fancy and hallucination, or are there independent and corroborative circumstances which Lady Byron could not have invented, which invest her story with a high degree of internal probability. As we have said, the balance of proof in our judgment leans to the latter alternative. With that proof we proceed.

As soon as Byron was clear of England, he wrote the famous verses "To Augusta," which were never published till after his death, beginning,

"My sister, my sweet sister."

It is certainly open to anybody to say that it might be only fraternal love which dictated the very strong language of this remarkable poem; it is also certain, on the other hand, that, read by the light of Lady Byron's story, these strange lines are

also susceptible of a very different and blacker interpretation. As we have said before, taken by itself, this poem concludes nothing; taken in connexion with other things, it seems to mean a good deal. The person to whom they were addressed, it must not be forgotten, had a husband, and, as the Peerage tells us, "issue." Poets may address their sisters in very affectionate language, but they seldom talk of living, and living for ever, with a married woman, even though she may be a favourite half-sister:—

"Go where I will, to me thou art the same,
A loved regret which I would not resign.
There yet are two things in my destiny—
A world to roam through, and a home with thee.
The first were nothing—had I still the last,
It were the haven of my happiness:
. . . . even at moments I would think I see
Some living thing to love, but none like thee.
* * * *
Oh! that thou wert but with me!
* * * *
Had I but sooner learnt . . .
* * * *
I had been better than I now can be.
The passions which have torn me would have slept.
I had not suffered, and *thou* had not wept.
* * * *
We were, and are—I am, even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign:
* * * *
We are entwined, let death come slow or fast."

Byron's first literary work after the separation was to write "Manfred," a ghastly tale, the interest of which centres on incest. We are quite aware that poets and dramatists are not to be identified with the characters or plots which they draw. Racine wrote "Phèdre," but this is no proof that he or any other tragedian practised the vices of the characters which he draws. We certainly cannot agree with Mrs. Stowe's wild assertion that "anybody who reads 'Manfred' with this story in his mind will see that it"—the story, we suppose—"is true." But when it is said, on the other hand, as has been said by a writer in the *Times*, "that it is almost impossible that a man with the secret of incest on his soul would have written 'Manfred,'" we should say, for the psychological reason to which we have already referred, this is a very likely thing for him to do. This view of the real significance of "Manfred"

is illustrated by a remarkable passage in a letter to Murray, of July 9, 1817, soon after its publication, and referring to a critique which had been sent by Murray to Byron:—"Send me the rest; and also p. 270, where there is an 'account of the supposed origin of this dreadful story:'—in which, by the way, whatever it may be, the conjecturer is out, and knows nothing of the matter. *I had a better origin* [for "Manfred"] *than he can devise or divine, for the soul of him.*" But this summer of 1816 was spent not only in writing "Manfred," but in Shelley's company; and Shelley at that very moment was engaged in writing the "Revolt of Islam," a direct and elaborate vindication of incest—and which, if we remember rightly, in its original form of "Laon and Cythna" was even more offensive than it now is. We have heard an ingenious but over-fanciful speculation that "Astarte," the strange name of the incestuous sister in "Manfred," contains a sort of anagram of the principal letters of the name of Byron's half-sister. But this is probably a casual coincidence. The drama of "Cain," on which Mrs. Stowe rests so much as confirming the charge of incest, is of much later date.

To conclude. Is it probable, or even possible, that Mrs. Stowe invented this history? Most improbable—all but impossible. Is it probable, or even possible, that Lady Byron invented this history? Most improbable—all but impossible. Is it probable, or even possible, that Lady Byron, without intending to mistake or misunderstand, did take *au sérieux* some foolish and culpable affectation of vice, some swagger and boast on her husband's part of some great and secret crime, which only existed in his own morbid imagination, and was only uttered for the sake of annoying his wife, and in his ordinary or extraordinary evil temper? Just possible—but very improbable. Is the story an hallucination on Lady Byron's part? Not at all likely—but of course possible. If, therefore, there is nothing absolutely to discredit Mrs. Stowe's truthfulness or Lady Byron's truthfulness, and if the probabilities against illusion or misunderstanding are so great, we are driven to the conclusion that, on the whole, the history in its essence—that is, as a charge of incest—is more likely on all accounts to be true than not. That it ought never to have appeared in this most unsatisfactory form, and that great blame attaches to the author of the revelation, we make no doubt.

From the SPECTATOR, *Sept. 4th.*

In common with most of our countrymen, we have long had a very genuine admiration of the peculiar genius of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. She spoke the slave's parable, and perhaps did more by "Uncle Tom's Cabin," to precipitate the final victory of the Abolitionists than could be assigned to the single agency of any other individual. When, accordingly, the gifted authoress visited this country, she was welcomed by many friends of the Negro population of America with unfeigned cordiality as the spokeswoman of a holy cause. By none, probably, was a more loyal and sympathizing reception accorded to her than by Lady Byron, who—in this respect at least at one with her husband—had from her earliest years cherished a profound antipathy to oppression in its varied forms, whether of a caste or of a creed. It would appear, however, from the "appalling" article—we use the adjective of the editor of *Macmillan*—which has just been published in that magazine by Mrs. H. Beecher Stowe, that she was not only honoured by Lady Byron as the representative of a sacred mission which lay very close to her ladyship's heart, but was made the depositary of those secrets of her married life concerning which she maintained towards the outer world so inexorable a silence. With Mrs. H. Beecher Stowe the present writer has no acquaintance whatever, but to judge from what she has written in this month's *Macmillan*, we are obliged, however painfully to ourselves, to conclude that she is just the last person in the world to whom we could commit the custody of a confidential communication.

Whether the paper in question is, or is not, the true story of Lady Byron's life, the world can only learn authoritatively, and we hope at no distant day will learn, from Lady Byron's own manuscripts; but it seems to us that a lady of ordinary courtesy, and possessed with but a common sense of literary decorum, would have made it her first duty to consult with Lady Byron's literary executors, and with her *two* surviving grandchildren, whom Mrs. Stowe calls "*some* of the best and noblest of mankind" (*sic*), before scattering broadcast over the planet the "painful details"—as they are well named—to which she has put her name. Again—and we write the sentence after most careful re-perusals of Mrs. Stowe's article—she has not only failed in courtesy and decorum and in proper consideration for the feelings of those who are surely

far more deeply interested in the fame of Lady Byron than a mere casual acquaintance can possibly be, but her statements are made without the least shadow of sanction from any competent source. And to this fact we beg very emphatically to call the attention of our readers on both sides of the Atlantic, because it is one which Mrs. Stowe has wrapped up, apparently, rather carefully, in words which have, to say the least, a very equivocal significance.

Mrs. Stowe writes as follows :—"It has been thought by some friends [friends of Lady Byron in this country?] who have read the proof sheets of the above, that the author should state more specifically her *authority* for the above narration."

Now, clearly the only possible *authority* which would justify Mrs. Stowe in writing and publishing what she calls the true story of Lady Byron's life would be, first, either a written statement, in Lady Byron's handwriting, instructing her after a certain time to make known to the world certain facts; or, second, a similar statement, issuing from Lady Byron's grandchildren or her literary executors. Mrs. Stowe does not possess any such instruction. But her language might cause the hasty reader to imagine that she did. She thus speaks, for instance, on p. 383, "By a singular concurrence of circumstances, all the facts of the case [*i.e.*, of the separation of Lord and Lady Byron] in the most undeniable and authentic form were *at one time* placed in the hands of the writer of this sketch, leaving to her judgment the use which should be made of them." On first reading these words, we own to having been misled by them, as if their meaning had been that Lady Byron had left a discretionary power with Mrs. Beecher Stowe as to the use she, Mrs. Stowe, might make of a certain document which, she asserts, had been "placed in her hands." Nay, more, Mrs. Stowe's phraseology is so careful as to warrant the inference that the materials at one time placed in her hands were still in her possession. In the very next sentence, however, the reader will note that our authoress does not pretend to have access to any *written evidence* for her assertions. She lays claim to merely "this knowledge," of which, she says, she would have made no public use but for the appearance of the work of Lord Byron's "mistress," the Countess Guiccioli. Still, the impression might remain that Mrs. Stowe was in reality not merely drawing upon her memory or fancy, but copying from an "undeniable and authentic form" before her. But, in the

first place, she is probably aware, and the editor of *Macmillan* is still more likely to be aware, that not a single line of any manuscript of Lady Byron's could be printed in this country without the direct sanction of her representatives; and secondly, Mrs. Stowe's own statement at the close of her article, though lacking in explicitness, places the matter beyond all doubt. She will not, in so many words, avow that "the paper" which Lady Byron, in the sacredness of confidence, permitted her to see was returned by her, but she, in her own peculiar manner, reports that after two or three days' deliberation she wrote to Lady Byron that her ladyship would be "entirely justifiable in leaving the truth to be disclosed after her death, and recommended that all the facts necessary should be put in the hands of some persons, to be so published."

Now, we venture to submit that the inevitable deductions to be drawn from all this circumlocution are none other than these:—(1) That Mrs. Stowe writes without authority; (2) that for her story she has no written testimony; (3) That in publishing this article she has departed from the letter of her own recommendation, which was that "the necessary facts should be placed in the hands of some persons, to be so published;" (4) that she has either written a narrative as fictitious as it is sensational, or she has been guilty of a breach of confidence.

We may add here what was stated in the *Times* of Thursday last by the solicitors of the representatives of Lady Byron, that, by her latest will, Lady Byron left all her papers in the hands of three literary executors, assigning to them exclusive and absolute control over all her manuscripts, suggesting, however, that in any use they might make of the documents entrusted to them, a primary regard was to be paid to the feelings of her grandchildren; but Mrs. Stowe is not one of these executors, and by her heedless rushing into print this authoress has acted in opposition to the dying injunctions of the person whom yet she affects to reverence as almost more than mortal.

And what is Mrs. Beecher Stowe's excuse, for justification there is none, for exhibiting to the world a statement which she might be sure would shock the moral sense of thousands of readers, and in certain cases inflict not a little pain? The only excuse alleged is that "the mistress of Lord Byron has the ear of the public!" We beg entirely to dissent from Mrs.

Stowe's estimate of the influence of the work which bears, in its English edition, the name of the Countess Guiccioli. What does Mrs. Stowe imagine to be the moral worth of the hysterical screams of the mistress against the wife? We must confess that we scarcely ever found it so hard a task to keep our gravity as we did when reviewing the so-called "*Recollections*" of "the Guiccioli" in this journal. But even if it were true, which we do not for an instant allow, that this Italian countess has the ear of the public, would the fact vindicate Mrs. Stowe from the charge of a public endeavour—we use her own words —to "violate the sanctuary of a silence where Lady Byron so long abode"? Indeed, Mrs. Stowe's assumed championship of outraged virtue reminds us of nothing so much as of the old Arabian legend which tells us how Abraham, in the night-watches, was rebuked by the great God for turning the unbeliever out of his tent in the words, "If I have borne with him for seventy years, couldst thou not tolerate him for a few brief hours?" For thirty-six years of widowhood, for eight of wifehood, Lady Byron kept her secret from the world; but poor Mrs. Stowe so burns to blurt out her "knowledge," that nine years after Lady Byron's death she becomes utterly incontinent.

Mrs. Stowe is curiously inconsistent in the presentment of her own defence. First of all, she writes, though still in a hesitating way, that "no person in England, *we think*, would, as yet, take the responsibility of relating the true history which is to clear Lady Byron's memory." Of course, no reliable individuals in England, who were in the confidence of Lady Byron—and there are a few such persons known to us—would take the responsibility either of publicly revealing that they were unworthy of the trust reposed in them, or of acting in disregard of the express terms of Lady Byron's will, or of the feelings of those for whose sakes, as well as from consideration of the dead, she maintained what the editor of *Macmillan* designates very properly a "religious silence." But Mrs. Stowe, in spite of her "thinking" that no one in England would as yet rise up to tell Lady Byron's history, all the same informs us that "after Lady Byron's death, she *looked anxiously hoping to see a memoir* of the person whom she considered the most remarkable woman that England had produced in this century." We must leave it to Mrs. Stowe to reconcile, as best she can, these contradictory modes of thinking and expectation, but we would suggest to her that if Lady

Byron's English friends could keep silence and bide their time, it would have been a good thing if she had followed their example.

In conclusion, we cannot but reckon it as an assumption of authority, when the editor of *Macmillan* endorses this paper as a "*complete* and *authentic* account" of Lady Byron's married life. It is neither the one nor the other. It is at most the recollections of what Mrs. Stowe alleges was told her or read by her thirteen years ago, the recollections, moreover, of a writer who speaks of the *few* years of Lady Byron's widowhood, who makes her live with her husband for two years, instead of thirteen months, and who cannot even spell properly Lady Byron's maiden surname.

Mrs. Stowe affirms of the interview with Lady Byron from which she professes to have learned what she now makes public, that it had almost the solemnity of a death-bed avowal. Did it not occur to Mrs. Stowe, as she wrote this sentence, that the only accordant conduct on her part with the death-bed avowal of Lady Byron would have been a silence like that of the grave?

From the STANDARD, *September 4th.*

Five-and-forty years ago a poet died in the cause of freedom at Missolonghi, whom Macaulay, with appropriate pomp of language, has called "the most illustrious Englishman of the nineteenth century." During the brief space of manhood that was allotted to him—only sixteen years in all—he kept the world hanging upon the accents of his lyre. Master of all moods, he had his generation attentive at his feet; and even the philosophical Goethe, who alone among modern men of letters could pretend to be his peer, declared him to be the greatest human product the world has ever seen or is likely to see. In times nearer to our own this applause of applauded men has not been echoed by those whose endorsement would scarcely have increased its authority. Literary criticism has long been dead amongst us, and the current opinions of fashionable conventionality have fondly attached themselves to the more feminine and academical verse of their own smaller day. Yet the comparatively silent but sounder portion of the public voice has all along steadfastly clung to the higher and better judgments we have cited; and we feel fully assured that the declaration made by Goethe on another occasion—that "the wonderful glory to which Byron has in the present, and

through all future ages, elevated his country, will be as boundless in its splendour as it is incalculable in its consequences, nor can there be any doubt that the nation which boasts so many great names will class Byron among the first of those through whom she has acquired such glory"—embodies the definite conclusion of every competent critic. There is one name below that does rival Shakespeare's, and it is his of whom the same great German has averred that "his unfathomable qualities are not to be reached by words."

But it was not by his writings alone that Byron became during life and after it a household word. He contracted an infelicitous marriage; and his separation from his wife aroused as much excitement in the public mind as a couple of years before was wont to be manifested on the news of a fresh disaster of Bonaparte's or the tidings of a fresh victory by Wellington. The attitude of the world on the occasion has been portrayed by the most brilliant of English essayists in one of the most epigrammatic passages he ever wrote; and his sentences are too familiar to need reproduction or imitation here. Though the whole world was dying to know the cause of the separation, not a soul was able to fathom it. Lord Byron publicly asserted that he was himself completely ignorant, while Lady Byron resolutely refused to proclaim it, save to a couple of lawyers, on whose lips she set the solemn seal of silence. People were thus left to their own surmises; and these naturally varied with the temper which undertook to solve the insoluble out of the depths of its own consciousness. It is enough to say that whilst the uncharitable, the inexperienced, and the prurient attributed to Lord Byron unutterable things, sensible men of the world came to the conclusion that there was nothing to solve; that what is called incompatibility of temper, a perhaps imperfect fidelity on the part of the husband, and a virtuous jealousy on the part of the wife, had conspired to put asunder a couple who never ought to have been joined together. Great compassion was always felt for the lady, for no one could deny that Byron was not likely to make an exemplary husband; and considerable sympathy was always felt for the man because he was superlatively gifted, had bestowed on his race immortal verse, and in more discreet and less exacting hands

> "Might still have risen from out the grave of strife,
> And found a nobler duty than to part."

Forty-five years after the death of the husband, and nine after that of the wife, during all which time not a word was ever breathed to solve what some still declared to be a mystery, but what the majority believed to be no mystery at all, but only a mystification, an American authoress, who is known to the public by a clever but uncandid romance, has been permitted by the editors of what has always been thought a respectable if not very flourishing magazine so tell in its pages what she calls "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life." She does so, she affirms, on the authority or Lady Byron herself, who, four years before her death, made her the *confidante* of the real cause of the separation. She adds that Lady Byron, besides recounting the history which is embodied in the article, showed the writer of it a paper containing a brief memorandum of the whole, with the dates affixed.

Now, we are not going to follow the example of many of our contemporaries, and allow the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to employ over again in these pages the well-known dexterity of the romance writer when fiction has to be made to look like fact. We shall state Mrs. Stowe's "True Story" in a much more naked form than that in which she, with her novelist's skill, instinctively felt it would be wise to state it, if it was ever to carry conviction to those who read it. We will suppress none of her language, but we will add some plainer and more unvarnished language of our own.

Mrs. Beecher Stowe's statement, professedly taken from Lady Byron's own lips and handwriting, then, is that the real causes of her separation from Lord Byron were that he had formed an adulterous and incestuous intrigue with his half-sister Augusta, the wife of Colonel Leigh; that in the very first hours of his marriage with Lady Byron he informed her that his soul was the depository of a dreadful secret of guilt, and torn with agonies of remorse; that she might have saved him from it had she accepted him when he first proposed to her; that then she might have made of him what she pleased, but that now she would find she had married a devil; that there came an hour of revelation—note the melodramatic language and the total absence of any reference to a date—when Lady Byron was made acquainted by Lord Byron of this incestuous and adulterous connection, and was told by him that he would on no account abandon it; that he had married her simply that she might be the cloak and accomplice of this atrocious passion; that on hearing such a disclosure Lady

Byron neither fled from him nor exposed nor denounced the crime; that she was resolved neither to leave nor to betray him; that she struggled with him convulsively for two years —again mark the melodramatic inaccuracy as to facts, for Lord and Lady Byron's married life consisted altogether of only one year, not of two!—that Lord Byron argued the case with her with all the sophistries of his powerful mind, tried to destroy her faith in right and wrong, to persuade her of the just claim of every human being to follow out what he called the impulses of nature, and to bring her to accept the marriage-tie as a friendly alliance to cover licence, both on his part and on hers; that he could extract from her neither anger, scorn, loathing, threats, nor compliance, but only the stereotyped and long-suffering answer, "I am too truly your friend to do this;" that when he found he had to do with one who would not yield, he determined to get rid of her altogether; that he did get rid of her; that Lady Byron did not leave her husband, but was by cruelty driven from him; that he drove her from him in order to follow up the guilty infatuation which was consuming him; that having done so, he went abroad, never seeing his sister again because Lady Byron made it a condition—a condition of what, is not stated—that the unhappy partner of his sin should not follow him out of England, but that the ruinous intrigue should be given up; that all the beautiful, tender, and pathetic verse, and all the letters he ever penned upon the subject were part and parcel of a deliberate and life-long hypocrisy; that he hated Lady Byron, and that the enmity, which, it is asserted, was constantly expressing itself in some publication or other, arose from her inflexible resolve that he and his sister should be separated; that he remained impenitent and implacable on this point to the hour of his death; that Lady Byron loved her husband with "deep affection and divine charity," manifesting "intense faithfulness and love" to his memory to the very last; and that always, and ever before her, during the few remaining years of her widowhood—mark, again, the melodramatic hand; the *few* remaining years of her widowhood were thirty-six, exactly as long (strange coincidence!) as her husband's entire life—was the image of Lord Byron, purified and ennobled, "the angel in him made perfect, according to the divine ideal."

Such is the substance of the "True Story" related in *Macmillan's Magazine* for the current month by the authoress

of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." We have no hesitation in declaring that in the mind of any one even decently capable of examining and sifting evidence, it is the most preposterous fable that was ever attempted to foisted by mingled hallucination and credulity on the curiosity of the public.

Not to dwell at present upon the obvious inconsistencies contained in the above long catalogue of statements, there are at least ten of them, any one of which is, *à priori*, so intensely improbable, that nothing but absolute demonstration would make any sane and unbiassed person believe it implicitly; and all of which, when taken together, constitute a cumulative improbability so enormous that no person, unless the most credulous creature in the world, could think of believing it at all. We are invited to believe—

1st. That Lord Byron conceived an incestuous passion for his sister.

2d. That he declared it to her.

3d. That she conceived a similar passion for him.

4th. That they indulged it; she, too, being a married woman.

5th. That Lord Byron married a third person, to whom he was profoundly indifferent, in order to cloak a crime which, *ex confesso*, was known only to the two guilty parties.

6th. That he then gratuitously informed his wife of it.

7th. That he tried to persuade her there was no harm in it.

8th. That she did not quit him in consequence of the confession and this strange pleading.

9th. That he quitted her or drove her from him because she tried to oppose his sin, though he had married her in order more conveniently to commit it.

10th. That having driven her from him out of infatuation for his sister, he permitted himself to be separated from the latter for the remainder of life.

It is surely enough to array these statements side by side to discredit them. Even probable stories must be consistent, but what credence can be given by any man in his senses to stories that are grossly improbable and grossly inconsistent as well? For the "True Story" to be credible, it ought to have run thus. Byron maintained an incestuous intrigue with his sister, and Lady Byron found it out. She then either left him at once, or as soon as he had flatly refused to promise that it should be given up. He did refuse, and she left him.

He then renewed the incestuous connection; or he abandoned it and held his peace for the remainder of his life through fear of his wife denouncing him. This, we say, though an uncommonly improbable story, would hang together in a fashion; but still there would have been difficulties in the way of its acceptance, which to our thinking would be insuperable. To begin with, and granting the guilt of the lovers, discovery by the wife would not be very likely; and, in the second place, discovery, if attended with an offer of condonation, would have been sure to bring at least feigned repentance. Even then the fact would still remain, that not feigning repentance Lord Byron lost no opportunity of parading his wrongs and calling upon his wife to speak out. But this story, difficult as it would be to believe it, is not the story at all. How infinitely more incredible still it is we have seen.

Having thus paused to mark the probability of this narrative when taken in its entirety, let us now examine its principal statements in detail.

What evidence have we of the terrible charge now made, for the first time, against Lord Byron and his sister? None whatever, but Mrs. Stowe's assertion of Lady Byron's assertion, made thirty-two years after the death of the former, and several years after the death of the latter. What is the evidence against it? Let us see; for it happens to be very considerable.

In 1812, as all the world knows, the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" were published, and it was by virtue of their success that Byron woke up one morning, as he said, and found himself famous. This was three years before his marriage, and two, according to Mrs. Beecher Stowe's account, before he commenced the incestuous intrigue with his sister, who had already been married five years, and was the Honourable Mrs. Leigh. To her one of the first presentation copies of "Childe Harold," was sent, and in it, if the volume has not been destroyed by the accusers of the fair fame of each, may to this day be read the following inscription in Byron's handwriting:—

"To Augusta, my dearest sister and my best friend, who has loved me much better than I deserved, this volume is presented by her father's son, and most affectionate brother."

In a letter written to a contemporary, it has been said that the gallantries of Augusta's mother, Baroness Conyers, were so notorious, and the absences from home of her husband,

Captain Byron, so frequent, that probably Lord Byron and the Hon. Mrs. Leigh did not regard each other as brother and sister at all. This may be taken as a fair sample of the inexact comments that have been made on the subject during the last few days. For nothing can be made more clear, as will be seen, than that Byron regarded Mrs. Leigh as peculiarly his sister from her goodness to him, and loved to call her by that title, which he regarded as the highest and purest of all. We have just seen one instance. Let us now look at the rest. In his journal, dated the 28th of March, 1814, occurs the following entry, among a number of others :—

"Augusta wants me to make it up with Carlisle. I have refused everybody else, but I can't deny her anything; so I must e'en do it, though I had as lief 'drink up Eisel, eat a crocodile.'"

In a letter written about a month earlier, from Newstead, to Mr. Murray, he says incidentally, "Mrs. Leigh is with me —much pleased with the place, and less so with me for parting with it, to which not even the price can reconcile her. Your parcel has not yet arrived—at least the magazines, &c." No reference could well be more natural; yet the letter was penned just about the time that Mrs. Stowe intimates that the incestuous passion commenced, *i. e.*, shortly after Lady Byron refused his first offer, and he himself had entered in his journal, "A wife would be the salvation of me."

The next testimony of his affection for his sister that we may cite was his desire that his daughter should be called after her. She is best known by the name of Ada, in consequence of the famous line—

"Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart!"

but her complete name was Augusta Ada; and, whilst we are thus presented with the astounding fact that Lady Byron allowed her own child to be called after the name of her husband's incestuous paramour, we discern another proof of Byron's loving attachment, even to the very name of his sister.

Augusta Ada Byron was born on the 10th of December, 1815 :—"The little girl," Byron wrote to Moore, "was and is very flourishing and fat, and reckoned very large for her days —squalls and sucks incessantly. Her mother is doing very well and up again."

By the middle of January it was all over. Lady Byron refused even to see her husband again, or, as Mrs. Stowe puts

it, had been purposely driven away by him. On the 25th of April—not till more than three months later—Byron quitted England. Concerning Mrs. Stowe's assertion that Lady Byron made it a condition—as we have observed, she does not say a condition of what—that the partner of his guilt should not accompany him to the Continent, we shall have a word more to say anon. But on the 16th of April, or nine days before his departure, we find Byron writing this short note to Rogers:—

"My sister is now with me, and leaves town to-morrow. We shall not meet again for some time at all events, if ever; and under these circumstances I trust to stand excused to you and Mr. Sheridan for being unable to wait upon him this evening."

Moore adds, in the "Life:"—"This was his last interview with his sister—almost the only person from whom he now parted with regret: it being, as he said, doubtful which had given him most pain, the enemies who attacked or the friends who condoled with him." We put it to anybody if there is in the foregoing note, written at such a crisis, anything to bear out the shocking story told by Mrs. Stowe, and not, on the contrary, everything to make belief in it impossible. Where are the secret guilt, the agony of soul, the remorse, the "insane fear of detection," which she says marked all his words and actions in this matter? His sister does not frantically stay with him to the last moment; his parting with her takes place nine days before he sails, and his allusion to this last interview is precisely what one would expect from a singularly affectionate brother, and nothing more.

He went abroad; and what are henceforward the recorded mentions that he made of this cherished sister? Writing to Mr. Murray from Venice, on the 3rd of March, 1817, he says, quite incidentally, "Ever since the conclusion of the Carnival I have been unwell (do not mention this on any account to Augusta, for if I grow worse she will know it too soon, and if I get better there is no occasion that she should know it at all)." The "on no account," seems, however, to have been a mere *façon de parler*, such as we all of us employ so often, and to have been disregarded; for in another letter shortly afterwards, to the same correspondent, we find him writing, "I have had another letter from my poor dear Augusta, who is in a sad fuss about my late illness! do pray tell her (the truth) that I am better than ever, and in importunate health, growing (if not grown) large and ruddy, and congratulated by

impertinent persons on my robustious appearance, when I ought to be pale and interesting." The person who can make anything out of these passages but easy and beautiful brotherly love must be determined to believe an unpleasant story at all costs, the cost of evidence included.

So much for prose testimony on this head. Let us now turn to verse, since Mrs. Stowe has availed herself of "Manfred" and "Cain" to support her story, and has done it in a way that does little credit to the purity of her imagination. Were we not speaking of a woman we should express ourselves more strongly. She quotes a passage from "Cain," with the object of showing that its author strove to argue that incest is no sin. We cannot spare space to reproduce it here, or we would gladly do so. Neither can we reproduce all that was said for and against "Cain" when it first appeared. But Byron himself wrote pages on pages in vindication of it, and one brief extract from them must content us. It occurs in a letter to Mr. Murray:—

"As to 'alarms,' do you really think such things ever led anybody astray? Are these people more impious than Milton's Satan, or the Prometheus of Æschylus? Are not Adam, Eve, Adah, and Abel as pious as the catechism? I beg leave to observe that there is no creed nor personal hypothesis of mine in all this, but I was obliged to make Cain and Lucifer talk consistently, and surely this has always been permitted to poetry."

When we add that "Cain" was dedicated to Sir Walter Scott, who pronounced it the best of Byron's works, and the dedication the greatest honour ever bestowed on him, we think we may dismiss Mrs. Stowe's nasty charge that it contains a defence of incest.

The way in which she tries to turn "Manfred" to account deserves, if possible, to be still more warmly stigmatised. She would lead the ignorant reader to suppose that Byron, quitting England, with the cherished guilt and heavy punishment of incest uppermost in his thoughts, forthwith composed "Manfred," the mystery of which, she avers, plainly turns upon that crime, and with an audacity to which we in vain seek for a parallel, she affirms that "anybody who reads the tragedy of 'Manfred' with this story," *i. e.*, her true story of Lady Byron's life, "in his mind, will see that it is true." We must observe firstly that, far from "Manfred" being the first work Byron composed after leaving England, both the third canto

of "Childe Harold," and the "Prisoner of Chillon," which even the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" would find it difficult to argue have any reference to incest, were written before it, along with various minor pieces. The precise value of the argument that if an allusion to incest can be construed out of any passage of "Manfred," everybody must see that Mrs. Stowe's story is true, and that Byron must have committed incest with his sister, may be dismissed with the remark that if it is good for anything it is good to show that Byron committed murder as well; or at least that if Lady Byron, through Mrs. Stowe, chooses to say so, we shall be obliged to believe it. Whilst, with a strategy not usually considered commendable, Mrs. Stowe cites passages from "Manfred" utterly irrelevant to her particular accusation, but strongly calculated to impress upon the reader the conviction that the Manfred represented was capable of any and every crime, and that Lord Byron and Manfred are one, she abstains from quoting the particular passage to which we refer, and which runs as follows:—

"*Manfred.*—I lov'd her and destroyed her.
Witch.— With thy hand?
Manfred.—Not with my hand, but heart, which broke her heart;
It gazed on mine and withered. *I have shed*
Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed;
I saw and could not stanch it."

Did Mrs. Stowe abstain from reproducing this dialogue because it proved too much? Possibly she believes that Lord Byron was a murderer, but she would be at a loss to show any reason whatever for thinking so, and even her own fabulous account of poor Mrs. Leigh bears testimony to the fact that she was murdered neither by her brother nor by anybody. And yet "anybody who reads the tragedy of "Manfred" with this story in his mind will see that it is true!" Again we say, such a strange instance of a person zealously playing the part of "devil's advocate" was never before known.

Although we have no fear that anybody reading "Manfred" will arrive at the conclusion Mrs. Stowe, with fierce perversity, labours to enforce, it will be well, whilst on this part of the subject, to refer to another cock-and-bull story evolved out of "Manfred" by no less a person than Goethe; for, in the first place, it will prove that "incest," at least, never entered Goethe's mind; and, secondly, it will show how absolutely without bounds are the crimes that may be imputed to authors if we

once adopt Mrs. Stowe's process of seeking in their works for a confirmation of affirmed enormities :—

"It is related," says Goethe, writing of "Manfred," "that Byron, when a bold and enterprising young man, won the affections of a Florentine lady. Her husband discovered the amour, and murdered his wife; but the murderer was the same night found dead in the street, and there was no one to whom any suspicion could be attached. Lord Byron removed from Florence, and these spirits haunted him all his life after. This romantic incident is rendered highly probable by innumerable allusions to it in his poems," and, as we have seen, by the words of Manfred—

> "I have shed
> Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed;
> I saw, and could not stanch it."

If Goethe had said of his story what Mrs. Stowe says of hers, that "anybody who reads the tragedy of "Manfred" with this story in his mind will see that it is true," he would at least have had "Manfred" to justify him. Mrs. Stowe has absolutely nothing to justify her, save her credulity and incomprehensible feminine zeal.

Upon Goethe's "highly probable incident" Moore has the following remarks :—

"The grave confidence with which the venerable critic traces the fancies of his brother poet to real persons and events, affords an amusing instance of the disposition so prevalent throughout Europe to picture Byron as a man of marvels and mysteries, as well in his life as in his poetry. The consequence is, so utterly out of truth and nature are the representations of his life and character long current upon the Continent, that it may be questioned whether the real flesh and blood hero of these pages—the social, practical, and, with all his faults and inconsistencies, English Lord Byron—may not, to the over-exalted imaginations of most of his foreign admirers, appear but an ordidary, unromantic, and prosaic personage."

So far as to the use which Mrs. Stowe has thought proper to make of Lord Byron's poetical compositions, in the strenuous attempt to convict him and his "dearest sister and best friend" of incest. We think that every one will acknowledge they recoil upon herself. Now, however, we will ourselves have recourse to his poetry, having already appealed to his prose, to establish affirmatively, by yet another method, that the notion

of the relationship charged can be harboured only by minds whose state we do not like to describe. The *Times*, which at once swallowed "The True Story" whole, without the faintest attempt at criticism or consideration, concluded its observations by saying that a black mark must henceforward be affixed to certain of Byron's compositions, if indeed we are ever to look at the man's works again. If, instead of penning such hasty language, the *Times* had taken the pains to read over the three poems addressed by Byron to Augusta, and which are the ones evidently alluded to, we cannot think the language would ever have appeared in its columns. Even if there were no other reasons to disbelieve this dreadful story—and thank Heaven! they are legion; while the reasons on the other side are monstrous and contradictory to the last degree—we should fearlessly appeal to these poems in order to rebut the abominable accusation. How does one begin?

"*My sister, my sweet sister! if a name*
Dearer and purer were, it should be thine;
Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim
No tears, but tenderness to answer mine.
Go where I will, to me thou art the same—
A loved regret which I would not resign.
There yet are two things in my destiny—
A world to roam through and a home with thee."

Is not this the same hand, influenced by the same heart, which in the flush of its first triumph wrote the inscription in one of the earliest presentation copies of the first two cantos of "Childe Harold?" "To Augusta, my dearest sister and my best friend, who has loved me much better than I deserved, this volume is presented by her father's son and most affectionate brother." In the poem it is the grandsire, in the prose inscription it is the sire, to whom he alludes as binding them together; but it is always the strong tie and the deep feeling of blood and kinship, the only one he can trust. Again he writes, in another of these poems to which a black mark is to be henceforth attached:—

"When all around grew drear and dark,
And reason half withheld her ray,
And hope but shed a dying spark,
Which more misled my lonely way;

"When fortune changed and love fled far,
And hatred's shafts flew thick and fast,
Thou wert the solitary star
That rose and set not to the last!

"Oh! blest be thine unbroken light!
That watched me as a seraph's eye,
And stood between me and the night,
For ever shining sweetly nigh.

"But thou and thine shall know no blight,
Whatever fate on me may fall;
For heaven in sunshine will requite
The kind—and thee the most of all."

The third poem remains, and its tone is precisely similar:—

"From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that what I most cherished
Deserved to be dearest of all.

"In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speak to my spirit of *thee*."

Turn to "Childe Harold," that third canto, as we have said, which was the first thing he wrote after quitting England for ever, and which alone would make us not only amply forgive, but be deeply thankful to those who drove him from it. Who does not know the lines commencing:—

"The castle crag of Drachenfels"?

They too are addressed to "My sister, my sweet sister," and he here speaks of her as "The one soft breast"

"*Whose love was pure, and far above disguise.*"

Hark, how he addresses her:—

"I send the lilies given to me;
Though long before thy hand they touch
I know that they must withered be;
But yet reject them not as such,
For I have cherished them as dear
Because they yet may meet thine eye,
And guide thy soul to mine even here,
When thou behold'st them drooping nigh,
And know'st them gathered by the Rhine,
And offered from my heart to thine!"

Is that the language of incestuous passion? Is that the utterance of one degraded soul to another? Shame on the man or woman who for a moment should think so! It is the voice of one love, and one only—the love in which there is no constraint, no inequality, no fear, no tumult, no jealousy, no

dread—the love of brother to sister, and lilies are its emblem. This was the sole sweet oasis in the life of one who, as has been said of him, "was inspired by the Genius of Pain."

One more quotation on this score, and we have done. He once wanted a simile for peace, happiness, tranquility: and where did he find it?

> "Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
> With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
> Which warns me with its stillness to forsake
> Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
> This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
> To waft me from distraction; once I loved
> Torn Ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
> Sounds sweet as *if a sister's voice reproved*
> *That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.*"

He never had but one sister, and yet his unquenchable notion of Sister was of one who lures a brother from "stern delights." He would perforce have associated her with one who lured *to* them, if this horrible tale could for one moment be admitted.

If the reader will turn back to the catalogue of statements which we have said must one and all be believed if this "True Story" is to be accepted, we think he will see that they are one and all really disposed of by what we have already said. Not wishing in any respect to imitate Mrs. Stowe, but avoiding all side issues, we have grappled directly with the one new, specific, accusation she has attempted to fasten on the memory of Byron; and in the full confidence that we shall be considered successfully to have rebutted it, we might well here dismiss the matter. But the charge is one of such infamy, and the issue raised is of such vast moment, that we think we are justified in yet begging for the attention of our readers whilst we very briefly show the further inaccuracies as to fact and the ludicrous contradictions into which Mrs. Stowe, by the zeal that outruns discretion and even candour, has been betrayed. And we pray our readers to bear in mind, whilst following our observations, that Mrs. Stowe's account professes to be not a happy guess or a plausible statement as to the causes which led to the separation of Lord and Lady Byron, but the one true story, exact in every particular, taken down from the lips and copied from the handwriting of Lady Byron herself, in an interview which had all the solemnity of a death-bed avowal.

We have seen how, though Mrs. Stowe expressly states that Lady Byron gave her "a paper containing a brief memorandum of the whole, *with the dates affixed*," no dates are mentioned by her at all, and Lady Byron is represented as having struggled convulsively with her husband for two years, whereas in reality they were not united for two years, but only for one. Furthermore, she dwells with all the force in her power upon Lord Byron's "damning, guilty secret filling him with an insane dread of detection," and yet she represents him both as making this secret the subject of his dramas and himself the guilty hero of them, and then goading Lady Byron by every species of insult into exposing him. She declares that he communicated this guilty secret to his wife, that he strove by sophistries to justify his crime, to sap her belief in Christianity and in right and wrong, and to get her to accept marriage as a mere cloak for the freer indulgence of the sexual passions, and that she was "the only one fully understanding the deep and dreadful secrets of his life;" and yet she quotes against him a letter written to Mr. Murray only a few days before Lady Byron left him for ever, in which he says—"I am very glad that the handwriting was a favourable omen of the *morale* of the piece, but you must not trust to that, for my copyist would write out anything I desired, *in all the ignorance of innocence*." The copyist was Lady Byron herself; and we are therefore invited to believe that she had retained "the ignorance of innocence," in spite of her having a "full understanding of the dreadful secret" that he maintained an incestuous intrigue with his sister, and though he was continually arguing with her that there was no harm in it and that one ought to follow out the impulses of nature! She pretends in one place that he married Lady Byron as a cloak for a crime which she elsewhere describes as a "guilty *secret;*" in another that he married her for money; and in a third that he did not want to marry her at all, but that "he had sent the letter in mere recklessness, had not really seriously expected to be accepted, and that the discovery of the treasure of affection which he had secured was like a vision of a lost heaven to a soul in hell." She quotes his words about Ada—

> "The child of love, though born in bitterness
> And nurtured in convulsion,"

and positively quotes them incorrectly, substituting convul-

sions for convulsion, in order to fortify a story she tells about Byron coming suddenly into his wife's room a day or two after the child's birth, and informing her, with cruel and malicious untruth, that her mother was dead; utterly unable to see from her blind partisanship, firstly, that if Byron had done anything of the kind he would scarcely have recorded it in a poem; secondly, that "nurtured" does not describe the condition of a child two days old; and, thirdly, that if the passage is good to prove, which it no doubt is, that Ada was born in bitterness and nurtured in convulsion—not convulsions—it is equally good to prove that she was "the child of love," a fact utterly inconsistent with Mrs. Stowe's whole story, and particularly with her marvellous statement as to the first words addressed by Byron to his wife immediately after the marriage ceremony. Moreover, she avers, at page 383, that had the melancholy remembrance of their separation been allowed to sleep, the "True Story" would never have been published; at page 394 her implied excuse for it is that cheap editions of Byron's works have brought his writings into circulation among the masses; and at page 396, that, looking anxiously to see a memoir of Lady Byron appear after her death, and none such appearing, she has performed the necessary task.

Such are some of the many "averments incompatible"—to use Lord Byron's phrase, singularly prophetic—into which Mrs. Beecher Stowe, professing to be instructed by Lady Byron, has fallen, whilst endeavouring, with frantic ardour, as though engaged in a task of benevolence, to fasten upon one of the greatest, and, beyond question, the most interesting of men that ever lived, and likewise upon his sister, his sweet sister, the most indelible of stigmas and the most revolting of crimes. We have been sparing of strong language; but we should be shrinking from our duty if we did not complete this part of our subject by giving expression to the opinion that both Mrs. Stowe, and those persons who may be responsible for the conduct of *Macmillan's Magazine*, have incurred, and will continue to incur, by their conduct, the lasting reprobation of all right-minded people.

Do we, then, suppose that the interview described by Mrs Stowe as held with Lady Byron is a fiction? Obviously not. Happily there is no necessity to suppose anything of the kind. That Lady Byron made certain communications to Mrs. Stowe we take to be certain; but before explaining and

accounting for Lady Byron's state of mind and hallucinations on the subject of the interview, let us just glance at Mrs. Stowe's state of mind during it.

In several places she speaks of Lady Byron's qualities as divine, and in two places she distinctly compares her to Christ. She talks of her as the impersonation of conscience, as a vision of heaven, as a guardian angel, as possessing a supernatural power of moral divination, as placing people's hands in that of the Saviour, as having more divine strength of faith and love than ever existed in a woman, and as more like a blessed being detached from earth than an ordinary mortal. In this worshipping vein she discourses of her throughout; and it is plain, therefore, that she sate wraptly credulous during the whole interview, listening as to the sacred words of a celestial revelation, and that it is vain to expect from her at the time any critical or even ordinarily cautious scrutiny of Lady Byron's manner and words, or any submission of them since to the ordeal of reason, consistency, or common sense. Just as little is to be hoped for from the other reckless accomplices in the publication of this "True Story," the conductors of *Macmillan's Magazine*, since "pure," "lofty," "divine," are the only epithets which they too think properly applicable to Lady Byron.

We must, therefore, fall back upon Lady Byron's statements as presented to us by them, and ask did Lady Byron really believe that her husband had an incestuous intrigue with his sister, that he refused to abandon it, and drove her from him because "she personated conscience," and in order that he might follow out the guilty passion that was consuming him? We believe that a time did come when Lady Byron did persuade herself of the truth of these horrible things; that this persuasion on her part was a complete hallucination; and having already shown that it could not be anything but hallucination, we will endeavour to explain how it grew up in her mind.

Mrs. Stowe does not pretend to fix the date when Lady Byron first believed it, but contents herself with the melodramatic assertion that "there came an hour of revelation," and that Lady Byron struggled convulsively for two years to cure her husband of his abominable passion. We are thus left with no information whatever as to when the revelation burst upon her, and are notoriously misinformed as to the length of time during which Lady Byron kept the revelation

to herself. Yet Lady Byron is Mrs. Stowe's authority both for the inaccuracy, and for the vagueness as to the hour of revelation. Under these circumstances we must have recourse to our leading witness—Lady Byron herself—and see what else she has stated on the subject to other people, and on other occasions.

Mrs. Stowe's case really is that Lady Byron did not quit her husband on account of his guilty infatuation for his sister, but that he, on account of it, so treated her as to compel her to leave him; and this tallies with the assertion made by Lady Byron in her written remarks on Moore's "Life," that she was resolved "*never again to be placed in his power.*" These words, which have been the cause of, if possible, still more horrible imputations against Byron even than the one brought by Mrs. Stowe, conclusively prove that her reason for refusing to live with him was not her belief in the truth of the latter. The question arises—did she *at that time* entertain the belief at all? Had it as yet entered her head, or entered it except in the form of an incipient hallucination? We have seen that, *only two or three weeks previously,* she had christened her own child *Augusta* Ada, after the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, and it may therefore, we think, be safely assumed that she did not then so much as imagine that between Mrs. Leigh and her brother there existed more than a fond fraternal affection. But if the hallucination had not commenced when late in December, 1815, her babe was christened; nor yet in January, 1816, a fortnight or so later, when she firmly resolved, according to her own language, "never again to be placed in her husband's power," when did it begin? It has been said that Dr. Lushington can set this matter at rest; but a moment's reflection is enough to show that he can do nothing of the kind, any more than Mrs. Stowe can. All that he can do is to inform us—and this, we think, he ought to do—whether the story told by Lady Byron to Mrs. Stowe in 1856 is the same story that was told by her to him in 1816. Supposing that she told him a totally different story, there would then be an end of this story and every other one, and of Lady Byron's credit altogether. Supposing, however, that the two stories agree, obviously it will prove nothing more than that Lady Byron entertained the hallucination at the date of her interview with Mr. Lushington, and that Mr. Lushington chose to believe it as Gospel truth. But what was the date of this interview? Lady Byron quitted her husband on the 16th

January; but her interview with Mr. Lushington did not take place till considerably after. The precise date has never been stated; but a near approach to it may be arrived at from a letter written by Mr. Lushington, fourteen years later, at the request of Lady Byron. In that letter the following passage occurs:—

"When you came to town, in about a fortnight, or perhaps more, after my first interview with Lady Noel, I was, for the first time, informed by you of facts utterly unknown, as I have no doubt, to Sir Ralph and Lady Noel."

Now, here we have a not precisely stated, but clearly a considerable amount of time accounted for between the time that Lady Byron quitted her husband, "resolved never again to be placed in his power," and the communication, even supposing it to be in agreement with the statement recorded by Mrs. Stowe, made by her to Mr. Lushington. For among them they had first tried to make out that Lord Byron was mad. Failing in that—not Lady Byron, but her mother, instructed by her—sought an interview with Mr. Lushington, for the avowed purpose of obtaining an opinion from him that a separation was indispensable. He has left it on record that instructed so far, he thought a separation not at all indispensable. Not till *about a fortnight or more later*, when Lady Byron, fearing to be "placed again in her husband's power," as she says, herself saw Mr. Lushington, and told him something fresh, in fact, something quite different from what she had instructed her mother to tell him, did he declare a reconciliation impossible.

Now, had the hallucination grown up in the considerable interval that elapsed between her resolving never to live with her husband again, and the moment when she discovered that the reasons she alleged for refusing to do so were declared to be insufficient? Had she been dwelling upon what she thought her wrongs, and trying to account satisfactorily to her own *amour propre* for what she esteemed her husband's want of consideration and devotion for her, and in a sense for the *spreta forma* which he was bound never in any way to treat with injury or neglect? Had she, moreover, whilst herself urging reasons that were declared to be insufficient, got wind of one of the thousand guesses that were being made by an inflamed curiosity to know what was the real sufficient reason for her refusal to return to him? Was the hallucination first suggested to her by her desire to account for his other alleged

treatment of her, by nasty rumour, by her resolve never to live with him again, or by all these three combined? If the hallucination really existed at this time, that, no doubt, must be the true account of its origin. If it took its rise later on, the matter becomes simpler still. Rumour, fostered by Lady Byron's dogged silence, attributed every crime conceivable to her husband—incest, it would seem, among the number; and once thus possessed of the hallucination, every word and incident in Byron's past and future life would but strengthen it. Mrs. Stowe credits Lady Byron with a "supernatural sense of moral divination," and it is quite clear that Mrs. Stowe's catalogue of Lady Byron's qualities was obtained from Lady Byron herself. This belief in a supernatural sense of divination would naturally make her infallible in her own eyes. Then came "Manfred;" then came "Cain;" then came the stanzas to Augusta; and Lady Byron, arguing like Mrs. Stowe—and no doubt Mrs. Stowe got the argument from Lady Byron—would feel that anybody who read them with the belief that Lord Byron had committed incest with his sister, would see plainly that he must have done so. The hallucination would grow with years, until—crowning statement of all!—Lady Byron's supernatural sense of moral divination enabled her to know that a child of Mrs. Leigh's was an "unfortunate child of sin, born with a curse upon her," and with abnormal propensities to evil in it," and to pick it out and watch over it till death took the responsibility out of her hands. Here we reach the climacteric of the fabulous. Of Mrs. Leigh herself it is said that she looked to Lady Byron in her last sickness and dying hours for consolation and help; and considering that she was left by her husband in comparative poverty—she had apartments in St. James's Palace—we think she was fully entitled to them. We can further easily understand how Lady Byron, the victim of hallucination, and of a decidedly pious temperament, would enjoy heaping "coals of fire" on the unconscious head of so terrible a sinner.

There now remain but few points to be considered; but we cannot quit the subject without alluding to them. Mrs. Stowe, whilst constantly referring to Lord Byron's terrible remorse and agony of soul, strives to make it appear he was so wicked that he would probably make light of incest, and asserts that he argued with his wife in favour of "Continental latitude, the good-humoured marriage in which complaisant couples mutually agree to form the cloak for each other's

infidelities." If she had been acquainted with a published letter written by Byron to Moore, from Venice, in March, 1817, she might have read the following passage:—

"The Italian ethics are the most singular ever met with. The perversion, not only of action, but of reasoning, is singular in the women. It is not that they do not consider the thing itself as wrong, and very wrong; but *love* (the *sentiment* of love) is not merely an excuse for it, but makes it an actual virtue, provided it is disinterested, and not a *caprice*."

So much for Byron's own ethical opinions, whatever his conduct may have been. Mrs. Stowe next lays stress upon the fact that the letter shown by him to Lady Blessington was never sent. Again, had she been better informed, she would have known that he wrote many letters to her which he did not send, and others which he did, according to the humour he found himself in, and the estimate he formed of their doing any good after he had written them.

With regard to Byron's insane dread of exposure by Lady Byron, on which we have already dwelt, we would ask, in addition, how is it possible that between them there should have passed such a correspondence as did take place in 1820, which we have not space to quote, but which may be found in the "Life," vol. iii., page 115? In it Byron offers her a perusal of his memoirs. She refuses, and throws out what he calls, in reply, a mysterious menace which he cannot pretend to unriddle, imploring her to "anticipate the period of her intention," and speak out before he dies. Does this look like dread of discovery?

Mrs. Stowe asserts that Byron was consumed by a devouring passion for his sister. If so, why did he leave England? There is no pretence that Lady Byron insisted on his doing so.

Lastly, there remains the evidence of his writings, which overflow with references to his love for his wife, and to her implacability towards him. All these, Mrs. Stowe says, were deliberate lies, set some in the most majestic, some in the most pathetic verse in the language, but mere part and parcel of a life of sustained hypocrisy. Let us turn to Moore. He says he was strongly inclined on first reading the famous "Farewell," to regard it rather as a work of art and fancy than anything more real.

"On reading, however," he continues, "Byron's own account of all the circumstances in the memoranda, I found that on this point, in common with a large portion of the

public, I had done him injustice. He there described, in a manner whose sincerity there was no doubting, the swell of tender recollections under the influences of which, as he sate one night musing in his study, these stanzas were produced—the tears, as he said, falling fast over the paper as he wrote them. The appearance of the MS. confirms this account of the circumstances under which it was written. Neither did it appear to have been from any wish or intention of his own, but through the injudicious zeal of a friend whom he had suffered to take a copy, that the verses met the public eye."

Such an absolute demonstration of the sincerity of his feelings cannot be expected in every instance; but it is pretty certain that, were there even no other evidence than that of his writings to rebut the charge of his hating his wife and labouring by brutality to get rid of her in order to gratify an incestuous passion for his sister, they alone would stand like impenetrable guardian spirits between his grave and the abominable aspersion Mrs. Stowe strains every nerve to inscribe on it. The story, as we have seen, besides brimming over with gross improbabilities, is full of utterly irreconcilable inconsistencies, and is born with the stamp of death upon it. To the end of time Byron and his verse will be among the most cherished possessions of mankind; and if Posterity deigns to preserve the memory of this foul fable in connection with his name, it will be only to remember that it was penned by an American writer of romances, published by a Magazine somewhat in need of notoriety, accepted at once and without a question by a leading newspaper during "the silly season," but after due scrutiny and just reflection entirely repudiated by the definitive voice of an offended people.

From the DAILY NEWS, *September 4th.*

SIR,—Being temporarily at this distance from town, and, therefore, not seeing all that may have appeared in the newspapers regarding Mrs. Beecher Stowe's extraordinary attack on the memory of Lord Byron, I hope that I may have been forestalled in some of my observations on the subject of good old English fairplay, especially towards the dead. But I do not feel that I should be justified in my conscience if I did not on such an occasion state some facts which my personal knowledge of Lady Byron made familiar to me. I knew her for some years, and visited her at her house in town, at her summer residence at Richmond, at Eton, and met her at her

son-in-law, Lord Lovelace's, at Ockham. She also visited us at Esher and Highgate. I am sure that Lady Byron was a woman of the most honourable and conscientious intentions, but she was subject to a constitutional idiosyncracy of a most peculiar kind, which rendered her, when under its influence, absolutely and persistently unjust. I am quite sure from my own observation of her that, when seized by this peculiar condition of the nerves, she was helplessly under its control. Through this the changes in her mood were sudden, and most painful to all about her. I have seen her of an evening in the most amiable, cordial, and sunny humour, full of interest and sympathy; and I have seen her the next morning come down as if she had lain all night not on a feather-bed, but on a glacier—frozen as it were to the very soul, and no efforts on the part of those around her could restore her for the day to a genial social warmth. In such moments she seemed to take sudden and deep impressions against persons and things, which, though the worst might pass away, left a permanent effect. Let me give an instance or two.

Lady Byron was at the period I speak of deeply interested in the establishment of working schools for the education of children of the labouring classes. She induced Lord Lovelace to erect one at Ockham; she built one on her estate at Kirby Mallory, in Leicestershire. On one occasion, in one of her most amiable moods, she asked me to lunch with her in town, that we might discuss her plans for this system of education. She promised to arrange that we should not be interrupted for some hours. I went at the time fixed; but, to my consternation, found her in one of her frozen fits. The touch of her hand was like that of death; in her manner there was the silence of the grave. We sat down to luncheon by ourselves, and I endeavoured to break the ice by speaking of incidents of the day. It was in vain. The devil of the North Pole was upon her, and I could only extract icy monosyllables. When we returned to the drawing-room I sought to interest her in the topic on which we had met, and which she had so truly at heart. It was hopeless. She said she felt unable to go into it, and I was glad to get away.

Again, she was in great difficulty as to the selection of a master for her working school at Kirby Mallory. It was necessary for him to unite the very rarely united qualities of a thoroughly practical knowledge of the operations of agriculture and gardening with the education and information of an

accomplished schoolmaster. She asked me to try and discover this *rara avis* for her. I knew exactly such a man in Nottinghamshire, who was at the same time thoroughly honourable, trustworthy, and fond of teaching. At her earnest request I prevailed on him to give up his then comfortable position and accept her offer. For a time he was everything in her eyes that a man and a schoolmaster could be. She was continually speaking of him when we met in the most cordial terms. But in the course, as I remember, of two or three years, the poor fellow wrote to me in the utmost distress, saying that Lady Byron, without the slightest intimation of being in any way dissatisfied with him, or with his management of the school, had given him notice to quit. He had entreated her to let him know what was the cause of this sudden dismissal. She refused to give any, and he entreated me to write to her and endeavour to remove her displeasure, or to ascertain its cause. I felt, from what I had seen of Lady Byron before, that it was useless. I wrote to him, "Remember Lord Byron! If Lady Byron has taken into her head that you shall go, nothing will turn her. Go you must, and you had better prepare for it." And the poor fellow, with a family of about five children, and his old situation filled up, turned out into the world to comparative ruin.

Now, apply the spirit of these facts to Lady Byron's separation from her husband, and to her conduct since. In all the accounts received from Lord Byron by Lady Blessington, by Moore, by Captain Medwin, Byron is made on all occasions, and to the last, to assert that he never knew the cause why Lady Byron separated from him. Mrs. Stowe says that Byron in a manner drove her from his house. I believe, and all the accounts of this controversy bear that impression, that the simple fact was that Byron earnestly urged her to go to her father and endeavour to obtain money to get the sheriff's officers out of the house, which the announcement of his having married a great heiress had brought upon him. On the way, Moore says on Byron's authority, she wrote to him in an affectionately playful humour, and Captain Medwin, on Byron's authority too, says, opening her note with the phrase "Dear Duck." There can be little doubt that the cause of her altered conduct was from her father representing that Byron would run through her fortune, and she must leave him, backed up by some such odious story by Lady Noel, and her woman, Mrs. Charlemont, as Mrs. Stowe gives.

However, Byron asserts that all his entreaties were vain to induce Lady Byron to assign a reason for her separation.

Lady Byron has been highly praised for her silence on this subject, as a noble reticence, a refusal on her part to make charges against her husband, which would necessarily stigmatise her own child, and consequently her own grandchildren. But mark! No sooner was Byron dead, having left a carefully-written memoir in his own justification, than Lady Byron sought to buy this up. She, in fact, never ceased her exertions till she had procured the destruction of her husband's own carefully prepared defence. No sooner was this accomplished, no sooner had she stifled his posthumous cries for a fair hearing by the public, than, if we are to believe Mrs. Stowe, she proceeds to blast his character to all posterity, by not merely whispering into the ear charges of the most damning and revolting nature, but she puts these into writing. What, I ask then, is become of the noble reticence and forbearance of Lady Byron? Can the English public, can any honourable person, sanction for a moment a proceeding of this nature? Can any one be allowed to destroy the evidence of their opponents, and then proceed to utter the vilest charges against them? It is no question with me what may have been the amount of Lord Byron's crimes; but I assert that the moment that Lady Byron deprived her deceased husband of the opportunity of self-justification, she deprived herself of every right to advance fresh charges against him. Her lips and her pen were sealed up by the most inexorable justice from uttering not simply assertions without proof, as in the present case, but even the most thoroughly evidenced facts in the cause between them. This, I am certain, will be the ultimate verdict of the British public, or it must abandon the noble spirit of equity which has distinguished it in every age of its national existence. It would do this in the case of its meanest citizen, much more in that of one of its erring but most illustrious poets.—I am, &c.,

WILLIAM HOWITT.

Penmanmawr, Sept. 2.

SIR,—It is stated in the introduction to the "Life and Times of Lord Byron" (3 vols. A.D. 1825), that the poet had written "Memoirs" of himself, which had been placed by him in the hands of his friend, Thomas Moore, "for the express purpose of publication after his lordship's decease. This publi-

cation, however, the family endeavoured to prevent," and Thomas Moore himself states that "the manuscript was accordingly torn and burned before our eyes." The biographer of Lord Byron very justly censures this rash act, which he calls "a flagrant injustice to his lordship, and a palpable and public wrong." He adds, "Family consideration is of but trivial and secondary consideration to public claims. Lord Byron was and is public property."

Lord Byron is stated expressly to have designed these memoirs of himself for publication. Mr. Thomas Moore believed the manuscript to be his property, but very naturally paused and pondered awhile before he committed these private revelations to the press. He says I placed the manuscript "at the disposal of Lord Byron's sister, Mrs. Leigh, with the sole reservation of a protest against its total destruction." And yet, for personal and family considerations, the declared intentions of Lord Byron were overridden, and this (historically considered) most valuable and important document was committed to the flames. Here, if you please, was a wrong done to the intentions of Lord Byron after his decease. But surely Mrs. Stowe has done no such wrong to the intentions of Lady Byron. The dark secret was entrusted to Mrs. Stowe, and it was left with herself to make such use of it as in her discretion she saw fit. Lady Byron was too strong-souled and clear-minded a woman not to realize the full meaning of her voluntary communication to Mrs. Stowe. Mrs. Stowe was bound by no ties of secresy by Lady Byron or her family, and she has only discharged a plain duty to herself and to the interests of history and society in the course which she has felt it right to take. I honour your journal for the straightforward and honest way in which it has dealt with this matter, and in which, for the most part, it deals with all matters affecting the interests of public and private morality. H.

September 2.

Letter of Lord Lindsay.—From the TIMES, *Sept. 7th.*

SIR,—I have waited in expectation of a categorical denial of the horrible charge brought by Mrs. Beecher Stowe against Lord Byron and his sister, on the alleged authority of the late Lady Byron. Such denial has been only indirectly given by the letter of Messrs. Wharton and Fords in your impression of yesterday. That letter is sufficient to prove that Lady Byron never contemplated the use made of her name, and

that her descendants and representatives disclaim any countenance of Mrs. B. Stowe's article; but it does not specifically meet Mrs. Stowe's allegation that Lady Byron in conversing with her thirteen years ago affirmed the charge now before us. It remains open, therefore, to a scandal-loving world to credit the calumny through the advantage of this flaw, involuntary, I believe, in the answer produced against it. My object in addressing you is to supply that deficiency by proving that what is now stated on Lady Byron's supposed authority is at variance in all respects with what she stated immediately after the separation, when everything was fresh in her memory in relation to the time during which, according to Mrs. B. Stowe, she believed that Byron and his sister were living together in guilt. I publish this evidence with reluctance, but in obedience to that higher obligation of justice to the voiceless and defenceless dead which bids me break through a reserve that otherwise I should have held sacred. The Lady Byron of 1818 would, I am certain, have sanctioned my doing so had she foreseen the present unparalleled occasion, and the bar that the conditions of her will present (as I infer from Messrs. Wharton and Fords' letter) against any fuller communication. Calumnies such as the present sink deep and with rapidity into the public mind, and are not easily eradicated. The fame of one of our greatest poets, and that of the kindest, and truest and most constant friend that Byron ever had, is at stake; and it will not do to wait for revelations from the fountain-head, which are not promised, and possibly may never reach us.

The late Lady Anne Barnard, who died in 1825, a contemporary and friend of Burke, Windham, and Dundas, and a host of the wise and good of that generation, and remembered in letters as the authoress "Auld Robin Gray," had known the late Lady Byron from *infancy*, and took a warm interest in her, holding Lord Byron in corresponding repugnance, not to say prejudice, in consequence of what she believed to be his harsh and cruel treatment of her young friend. I transcribe the following passages and a letter from Lady Byron herself (written in 1818) from *ricordi*, or private family memoirs, in Lady Anne's autograph, now before me. I include the letter because, although treating only in general terms of the matter and the causes of the separation, it affords collateral evidence bearing strictly upon the point of the credibility of the charge now in question :—

"The separation of Lord and Lady Byron astonished the world, which believed him a reformed man as to his habits, and a becalmed man as to his remorses. He had written nothing that appeared after his marriage till the famous 'Fare thee well,' which had the power of compelling those to pity the writer who were not well aware that he was not the unhappy person he affected to be. Lady Byron's misery was whispered soon after her marriage, and his ill-usage; but no word transpired, no sign escaped from her. She gave birth shortly to a daughter, and when she went, as soon as she was recovered, on a visit to her father's, taking her little Ada with her, no one knew that it was to return to her lord no more. At that period a severe fit of illness had confined me to bed for two months. I heard of Lady Byron's distress; of the pains he took to give a harsh impression of her character to the world. I wrote to her, and entreated her to come and let me see and hear her, if she conceived my sympathy or counsel could be any comfort to her. She came—but what a tale was unfolded by this interesting young creature who had so fondly hoped to have made a young man of genius and romance (as she supposed) happy! They had not been an hour in the carriage which conveyed them from church when, breaking into a malignant sneer, 'Oh! what a dupe you have been to your imagination. How is it possible a woman of your sense could form the wild hope of reforming *me*? Many are the tears you will have to shed ere that plan is accomplished. It is enough for me that you are my wife for me to hate you; if you were the wife of any other man I own you might have charms,' &c. I, who listened, was astonished. 'How could you go on after this,' said I, 'my dear? Why did you not return to your father's?' 'Because I had not a conception he was in earnest; because I reckoned it a bad jest, and told him so—that my opinions of him were very different from his of himself, otherwise he would not find me by his side. He laughed it over when he saw me appear hurt, and I forgot what had passed till forced to remember it. I believe he was pleased with me, too, for a little while. I suppose it had escaped his memory that I was his wife.' But she described the happiness they enjoyed to have been unequal and perturbed. Her situation in a short time might have entitled her to some tenderness, but she made no claim on him for any. He sometimes reproached her for the motives that had induced her to marry him—all was 'vanity, the vanity of

Miss Milbanke carrying the point of reforming Lord Byron! He always knew *her* inducements; her pride shut her eyes to *his; he* wished to build up his character and his fortunes; both were somewhat deranged; she had a high name and would have a fortune worth his attention—let her look to that for *his* motives!' 'O, Byron, Byron,' she said, 'how you desolate me!' He would then accuse himself of being mad, and throw himself on the ground in a frenzy, which she believed was affected to conceal the coldness and malignity of his heart—an affectation which at that time never failed to meet with the tenderest commiseration. I could find by some implications, not followed up by me lest she might have condemned herself afterwards for her involuntary disclosures, that he soon attempted to corrupt her principles both with respect to her own conduct and her latitude for his. She saw the precipice on which she stood, and kept his sister with her as much as possible. He returned in the evenings from the haunts of vice, where he made her understand he had been, with manners so profligate! 'O, the wretch!' said I, 'and had he no moments of remorse?' 'Sometimes he appeared to have them. One night, coming home from one of his lawless parties, he saw me so indignantly collected, and bearing all with such a determined calmness, that a rush of remorse seemed to come over him; he called himself a monster, though his sister was present, and threw himself in an agony at my feet. "I could not—no—I could not forgive him such injuries. He had lost me for ever!" Astonished at the return of virtue, my tears, I believe, flowed over his face, and I said, "Byron, all is forgotten; never, never shall you hear of it more!" He started up, and, folding his arms while he looked at me, burst into laughter. "What do you mean?" said I. "Only a philosophical experiment, that's all," said he; "I wished to ascertain the value of your resolutions."' I need not say more of this prince of duplicity, except that varied were his methods of rendering her wretched, even to the last. When her lovely little child was born, and it was laid beside its mother on the bed, and he was informed 'he might see his daughter,' after gazing at it with an exulting smile, this was the ejaculation that broke from him, 'Oh! what an implement of torture have I acquired in you!' Such he rendered it by his eyes and manner, keeping her in a perpetual alarm for its safety when in his presence. All this reads madder than I believe he was; but she had not then made up her mind to disbelieve his pre-

tended insanity, and conceived it best to intrust her secret with the excellent Dr. Baillie, telling him all that seemed to regard the state of her husband's mind, and letting his advice regulate her conduct. Baillie doubted of his derangement, but, as he did not reckon his own opinion infallible, he wished her to take precautions as if her husband was so. He recommended her going to the country, but to give him no suspicion of her intentions of remaining there, and for a short time to show no coldness in her letters till she could better ascertain his state. She went—regretting, as she told me, to wear any semblance but the truth. A short time disclosed the story to the world. He acted the part of a man driven to despair by her inflexible resentment and by the arts of a governess (once a servant in the family) who hated him. I will give you," proceeds Lady Anne, "a few paragraphs transcribed from one of Lady Byron's own letters to me. It is sorrowful to think that in a very little time this young and amiable creature, wise, patient, and feeling, will have her character mistaken by every one who reads Byron's works. To rescue her from this, I preserved her letters, and when she afterwards expressed a fear that anything of her writing should ever fall into hands to injure him (I suppose she meant by publication) I safely assured her it never should. But here this letter shall be placed, a sacred record in her favour, unknown to herself:—

"'I am a very incompetent judge of the impression which the last canto of "Childe Harold" may produce on the minds of indifferent readers. It contains the usual trace of a conscience restlessly awake, though his object has been too long to aggravate its burden, as if it could thus be oppressed into eternal stupor. I will hope, as you do, that it survives for his ultimate good. It was the acuteness of his remorse, impenitent in its character, which so long seemed to demand from my compassion to spare every semblance of reproach, every look of grief, which might have said to his conscience, "You have made me wretched." I am decidedly of opinion that he *is* responsible. He has wished to be thought partially deranged, or on the brink of it, to perplex observers and prevent them from tracing effects to their real causes through all the intricacies of his conduct. I was, as I told you, at one time the dupe of his acted insanity, and clung to the former delusions in regard to the motives that concerned me personally till the whole system was laid bare. He is the absolute monarch of words, and uses them, as Buonaparte did lives, for conquest,

without more regard to their intrinsic value, considering them only as ciphers which must derive all their import from the situation in which he places them and the ends to which he adapts them with such consummate skill. Why, then, you will say, does he not employ them to give a better colour to his own character? Because he is too good an actor to overact, or to assume a moral garb which it would be easy to strip off. In regard to his poetry egotism is the vital principle of his imagination, which it is difficult for him to kindle on any subject with which his own character and interests are not identified; but by the introduction of fictitious incidents, by change of scene or time, he has enveloped his poetical disclosures in a system impenetrable except to a very few, and his constant desire of creating a sensation makes him not averse to be the object of wonder and curiosity, even though accompanied by some dark and vague suspicions. Nothing has contributed more to the misunderstanding of his real character than the lonely grandeur in which he shrouds it, and his affectation of being above mankind, when he exists almost in their voice. The romance of his sentiments is another feature of this mask of state. I know no one more habitually destitute of that enthusiasm he so beautifully expresses, and to which he can work up his fancy chiefly by contagion. I had heard he was the best of brothers, the most generous of friends, and I thought such feelings only required to be warmed and cherished into more diffusive benevolence. Though these opinions are eradicated, and could never return but with the decay of my memory, you will not wonder if there are still moments when the association of feelings which arose from them soften and sadden my thoughts. But I have not thanked you, dearest Lady Anne, for your kindness in regard to a principal object—that of rectifying false impressions. I trust you understand my wishes, which never were to injure Lord Byron in any way; for, though he would not suffer me to remain his wife, he cannot prevent me from continuing his friend; and it was from considering myself as such that I silenced the accusations by which my own conduct might have been more fully justified. It is not necessary to speak ill of his heart in general; it is sufficient that to me it was hard and impenetrable—that my own must have been broken before his could have been touched. I would rather represent this as *my* misfortune than as *his* guilt; but, surely, that misfortune is not to be made my crime! Such are my feelings; you will judge

how to act. His allusions to me in "Childe Harold" are cruel and cold, but with such a semblance as to make *me* appear so, and to attract all sympathy to himself. It is said in this poem that hatred of him will be taught as a lesson to his child. I might appeal to all who have ever heard me speak of him, and still more to my own heart, to witness that there has been no moment when I have remembered injury otherwise than affectionately and sorrowfully. It is not my duty to give way to hopeless and wholly unrequited affection; but, so long as I live, my chief struggle will probably be not to remember him too kindly. I do not seek the sympathy of the world, but I wish to be known by those whose opinion is valuable and whose kindness is dear to me. Among such, my dear Lady Anne, you will ever be remembered by your truly affectionate

"'A. Byron.'"

It is the province of your readers and of the world at large to judge between the two testimonies now before them—Lady Byron's in 1816 and 1818, and that put forward in 1869 by Mrs. B. Stowe, as communicated by Lady Byron thirteen years ago. In the face of the evidence now given, positive, negative, and circumstantial, there can be but two alternatives in the case,—either Mrs. B. Stowe must have entirely misunderstood Lady Byron, and been thus led into error and misstatement, or we must conclude that, under the pressure of a lifelong and secret sorrow, Lady Byron's mind had become clouded with an hallucination in respect of the particular point in question.

The reader will admire the noble but severe character displayed in Lady Byron's letter; but those who keep in view what her first impressions were, as above recorded, may probably place a more lenient interpretation than hers upon some of the incidents alleged to Byron's discredit. I shall conclude with some remarks upon his character, written shortly after his death by a wise, virtuous, and charitable judge, the late Sir Walter Scott, likewise in a letter to Lady Anne Barnard:—

"Fletcher's account of poor Byron is extremely interesting. I had always a strong attachment to that unfortunate, though most richly gifted man, because I thought I saw that his virtues (and he had many) were his own, and his eccentricities the result of an irritable temperament, which sometimes approached nearly to mental disease. Those who are gifted with strong nerves, a regular temper, and habitual self-com-

mand are not perhaps aware how much of what they may think virtue they owe to constitution; and such are but too severe judges of men like Byron, whose mind, like a day of alternate storm and sunshine, is all dark shades and stray gleams of light, instead of the twilight gray which illuminates happier though less distinguished mortals. I always thought that when a moral proposition was placed plainly before Lord Byron, his mind yielded a pleased and willing assent to it, but, if there was any side view given in the way of raillery or otherwise, he was willing enough to evade conviction. . . . It augurs ill for the cause of Greece that this master-spirit should have been withdrawn from their assistance just as he was obtaining a complete ascendency over their counsels. I have seen several letters from the Ionian Islands, all of which unite in speaking in the highest praise of the wisdom and temperance of his counsels, and the ascendency he was obtaining over the turbulent and ferocious chiefs of the insurgents. I have some verses written by him on his last birthday; they breathe a spirit of affection towards his wife, and a desire of dying in battle, which seems like an anticipation of his approaching fate."

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Dunecht, Sept. 3. LINDSAY.

From the TIMES, *Sept. 6th.*

SIR,—Americans in Europe are often surprised by the comments of the London Press on the affairs of their country, but the great attention just now paid to a recent article of Mrs. Beecher Stowe with reference to Lord Byron causes more than usual astonishment.

'We all know that that lady is a mere sensationalist writer; that nothing from her pen is considered by the American public as historically reliable, and that she will at any time sacrifice truth, if by so doing she can succeed in attracting notoriety. Indeed her only literary character was derived from her "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which was as devoid of truth of statement in its attempt to describe Southern society as it is evident her present ("True Story of Lady Byron's Life") is an exaggerated fiction without more than a slight foundation.

And as the great notice which a certain class of English philanthropists gave that book at the time gave her the only literary reputation she ever had with us, we are not grieved

that she should now turn ungratefully on all England by calumniating the private character of her greatest modern poetic genius.

In America the Beechers are known as mere "sensationalists," without true merit or substantial talents. While the "crowd" is amused with their sayings and antics, the thinking portion of the people pay little heed to anything emanating from their fruitful pens.

Very truly, &c.,

Paris, Sept. 3. A MEMBER OF CONGRESS.

From the DAILY TELEGRAPH, *September 6th.*

Whatever other objection may be raised to the sensational disclosures concerning Lord Byron's married life, there cannot be two opinions respecting the effectiveness with which the sensation has been produced. Mrs. Stowe's revelations have been published simultaneously in periodicals which deservedly hold high rank, the one in England the other in America; and all the mechanism of quotations from advance sheets and anticipatory paragraphs, has been employed to stimulate a morbid curiosity which unfortunately needed but little provocation. Commercially speaking, the result has doubtless been satisfactory to all concerned. The publishers of this painful story stand too high in reputation to be suspected of anything more than an error of judgment; but, for the credit of literature, we could wish that a disclosure, which, whether false or true, is almost equally terrible, had not been made in such a manner as to suggest the idea of a pecuniary speculation. Meanwhile, it is some consolation to see that public opinion both in England and America has been singularly unanimous in denouncing alike the disclosure itself, and the manner in which it has been made. The condemnation, of course proceeds on the idea that the authoress can produce no other warrant for telling the secret entrusted to her—no further recital of the reasons which in her judgment rendered its revelation obligatory—no fuller corroboration of its truth—than she has made in her original statement. It is with much reluctance that we incline to regard such an assumption as correct. Mrs. Stowe, her friends, and her publishers in London as well as in Boston, have now been aware for a considerable period of the demand for proof which has been raised by all to whom the cause of literary and historic truth is dear, The telegraph has conveyed the opinion of England

to America, and that of America to England; and yet no attempt has been made to relieve Mrs. Stowe from the stigma of having revealed a dead secret without cause, without authority, and without confirmatory proof. Under these circumstances we are almost compelled to abandon the hope that the lady who has taken upon herself the responsibility of telling the true story of Lady Byron's life can furnish us with evidence on which either to accept or reject her ghastly narrative. Nor is it likely, we fear, that an absolute corroboration or refutation of the tale will be furnished at present by the few persons who could throw light upon the mystery. Messrs. Wharton and Fords, the solicitors for the late Lady Byron and her representatives, have addressed a letter to the public journals, in which, while they comment severely upon the breach of confidence committed by Mrs. Stowe, they express no opinion one way or the other upon the truth or falsehood of her statement, and hold out no prospect of their publishing the documents which Lady Byron placed in the hands of her trustees, with the condition that no one, "however nearly connected with her, was upon any plea whatsoever to be allowed to have access to or to inspect them." In the same way Dr. Lushington, who is known to have been entrusted with the secret of the separation, has as yet made no sign; and it seems probable that, for the present, the true story of the Byron scandal will remain, as it has remained for the last half century, a matter of controversy.

In that case the opinion of the public will be formed upon the imperfect data already existing. The silence of those who alone know the true facts of the case has been construed to be incompatible with a conviction of Lord Byron's innocence. It should, however, be remembered that there is no person now living who, while cognisant of the truth, can claim to speak as the champion of the poet's memory. The sole depositories of the secret, be it what it may, are bound by the very nature of their trust to protect the posthumous reputation of Lady Byron—not of the husband from whom she unquestionably suffered cruel wrong of some kind. Now supposing—we are, of course, only suggesting a possible hypothesis—those trustees to be aware that Lady Byron, together with many valid causes of complaint of which she has left written testimony, cherished also jealous delusions based on no sufficient ground; would they be consulting her interest and their duty by telling all they know? Many will agree

with us, that after Mrs. Stowe's statement has appeared—coming, or professing to come, from Lady Byron's lips—it would be better for the living and the dead that the papers entrusted to her literary executors should be produced. But we can quite anticipate the reply, that one breach of trust does not justify another, and that their duty is to obey the conditions subject to which they undertook their trust. As for the story itself, it can be rejected only on the supposition that Lady Byron laboured under a delusion with regard to her husband's criminal intercourse with his half-sister. We must put aside the hypothesis that the tale is an invention of Mrs. Stowe's imaginative brain. Omitting all reference to the fact that such an idea is rendered utterly improbable by the character of the authoress, it is dispelled by the fact that Lady Byron did undoubtedly make similar disclosures to other people in this country, though they—unlike Mrs. Stowe—have hitherto resisted the temptation of turning their knowledge into a telling magazine article. The question which we would raise is this: How far is it inconsistent with the *known* facts that Lady Byron should have been mistaken in her suspicions? Mrs. Stowe tells us, in her Minerva Press language, that "there came an hour of revelation, an hour when, in a manner which left no room for doubt, Lady Byron saw the full depth of the abyss of infamy which her marriage was expected to cover." If the assertion went no farther, it would merit little weight. Mrs. Stowe has betrayed so gross an ignorance, so culpable an inaccuracy about the common historical facts of Lord Byron's married life, and her editors have exercised so little discretion in the revision of the story which they have given to the world, that we decline to receive her statement as anything more than the inaccurate and untrustworthy report of a conversation held with Lady Byron. Even if we ignore the fatal blunder of assigning two years as the duration of a marriage which barely lasted a twelvemonth, we are compelled, unless we reject Mrs. Stowe's statement altogether, to suppose that Lady Byron lived with her husband for a considerable period after she had discovered that he was carrying on an incestuous intrigue. As if that assertion were not sufficiently incredible, we are also asked to believe that during this period of "convulsive struggle," to please her husband, the outraged wife not only copied out with her own hand the poem of "Parisina," the subject of which is an incestuous passion, but allowed her first-born child

to be named, without protest, after the woman who was at once her husband's sister, his mistress, and her own favoured rival!

The whole story is so full of improbabilities and inconsistencies that we should summarily dismiss it as the creation of a jealous woman's excited imagination, if it were not for one circumstance to which insufficient attention has been paid in the various criticisms upon the article. In words which there is no possibility of misunderstanding, Mrs. Stowe declares that the criminal intercourse between Lord Byron and his sister was followed by the birth of a child; that the child grew up to maturity; and that it was tended and brought up by Lady Byron herself. Nay, we gather from the confused narrative that the child was known to be an illegitimate daughter of Lord Byron's, though the dreadful secret of her parentage was revealed only to persons who, like the authoress, of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," were taken into Lady Byron's full confidence. If this statement were true, there would be an end to the controversy. No hypothesis of jealous suspicion can account for the existence of such a child; no argument as to antecedent improbabilities can explain away so damning an evidence of guilt. But is it possible that Lady Byron could have possessed that certainty as to the child's parentage which Mrs. Stowe attributes to her? In order to appreciate the force of this question, it is necessary to consult the dates. As several of our contemporaries have alluded by name to the unhappy lady whose character has been subjected, years after her death, to so foul a charge, it would be mere affectation to refrain any further from mentioning her name. A child, says Mrs Stowe, was born "with strange abnormal propensities to evil," and the mother of that child, she adds, was the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, the half-sister of Lord Byron by her father's first marriage, and the wife of Colonel Leigh. According to Mrs. Stowe's story, the connection between Byron and Mrs. Leigh commenced after the rejection of his suite by Miss Milbanke, that is in the year 1813, and ended on his leaving England in 1816, the one condition of Lady Byron's consenting to keep the terrible secret being, that Mrs. Leigh should not accompany Lord Byron abroad. This child must, therefore, have been born between the years 1813 and 1816. Mrs. Leigh, who, by the way, was five years older than Byron—was married in 1807, had several children by her husband, and was living with him as his wife during the years of her brother's

courtship and marriage. If, therefore, Mrs. Leigh had had a child within the period stated, it would have been putatively and legally the child of her husband, Colonel Leigh; and there seems no conceivable reason why this child should have been brought up as the illegitimate offspring of Lord Byron. Colonel Leigh attained a mature age; and his wife died, in 1851, in St. James's Palace, where apartments had been assigned to her. Under these circumstances it is needless to say, that if Mrs. Leigh had an illegitimate child, the fact was unknown to the world and to her husband. Yet, taking Mrs. Stowe's statements for granted, we are asked to believe, either that Mrs. Leigh, being the mother of a child by her own brother, had called attention to the dreadful secret by not having the child brought up as born in lawful wedlock, or else, that she wantonly and needlessly confided the tale of its true parentage to Lady Byron. Either supposition is so extravagant that we must decline to accept it without absolute proof. There is, however, a third supposition entirely inconsistent with Mrs. Stowe's theory, but strongly confirmatory of our own. Is it not possible, or even probable, that Lady Byron—devoured as she obviously was with a jealous passion for her faithless husband—should have jumped to the conclusion that an illegitimate child of the poet's was the result of the intimacy of which she had formed so dark a suspicion? If that were the case, the very fact that she entertained such a conclusion without proof would justify us in dismissing the whole charge against Lord Byron as the product of a diseased imagination. The subject is almost too painful for discussion. That it should have to be discussed at all is the result of an indiscretion on the part of Mrs. Stowe and her publishers, for which it would be difficult to find too harsh a name.

From the TIMES, *Sept. 7th.*

SIR,—I cannot understand why "A Member of Congress" considers an anonymous attack on Mrs. Beecher Stowe a fitting contribution to the controversy her article on Lady Byron's separation from her husband calls forth. His comments are beside the question, whether the article was judicious or not. The Editor of *Macmillan's Magazine* can doubtless justify its English publication, but of Mrs. Stowe's truthfulness and freedom from all selfish motive in writing it I am quite certain. Many years' personal intimacy with Mrs. Stowe induces me to interpose my unqualified contradiction to the

statements of the "Member of Congress:" a more genuine, true-hearted, and truth-loving character does not exist than the one he thus anonymously traduces.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

London, Sept. 6. SAMPSON LOW, Jun.

From the STANDARD, *September 7th.*

SIR,—Whatever may be the issue, on the production of further evidence, of the Byron controversy, the thanks of every Englishman are due to the author of the masterly critique which appeared in your journal of Saturday last. Not to have despaired of rescuing a name, which, however dimmed by mortal stains, is yet a household name, or should be, throughout Great Britain, was to render a service to humanity at large; and the service is none the less that it was performed in the face of the precipitate treason of the *Times*, the *Daily News*, and the *Saturday Review*.

No one whose opinion is worthy of a moment's is ignorant how easy it is to draw from the same topic precisely contrary presumptions; and to believe that Lord Byron irritated and defied his wife because he was in agony of terror lest she should denounce him; and that he was constantly alluding to and half betraying his monstrous secret from his never-sleeping anxiety to conceal it, is worthy but of reasoners who adopt "*Credo quia impossibile*" as their motto. A rhetorician or special pleader has since the days of Aristotle, and for aught I know before him, had leave to practise this system of persuasion; but facts demand a different treatment, and what is stated as such should rest on irrefragable proof and be no mere *ipse dixit* of an advocate or accuser. In the article in the June number of the *Temple Bar Magazine*, so (to my mind, undeservedly) praised by the Saturday Reviewer, occurs a mention of Lord Byron's daughter by an English lady, Allegra; and in Mrs. B. Stowe's highly-spiced contribution to *Macmillan's* sensational mention is made of a child of six, the fruit of the alleged crime. Now, sir, I submit that Mrs. B. Stowe and the anonymous gentleman of the *Temple Bar* are bound, if they have one spark of honour, to explain and substantiate their assertions. Was Allegra "the child of sin?" And as Byron's sister was married at the time of the imputed transgression, by what evidence does Mrs. B. Stowe (and her abettor in case Allegra be this child), other than a not to us infallible power of spiritual intuition,

prove that what she calls the child of sin was not the child of honourable wedlock? I hope the *Standard*, the *Examiner*, the *Telegraph*, and whatever other journals seek to rescue England from this horrible disgrace, from the fatuous suicide of surrendering to eternal infamy, on something far short of demonstrative evidence, one of the greatest of her sons, will not let this subject rest till the accusers have answered every fair question and produced in full their case with all its evidence.

We have supped full enough of horrors—no farther abyss remains—let us see whether no aggravation of the present being possible, we cannot abolish it and be ourselves again.

Yours truly.

C. W. H

SIR,—The energy with which you have undertaken to expose the insane slander on Byron's memory, propagated by Mrs. Stowe, and accepted by a large portion of the press with such credulous and eager animosity, encourages me to hope that you will not be deterred by the length of this letter from allowing me to second, by my own quota of assistance (*quantum valeat*), so just an effort. I shall carefully avoid using any arguments which have been already produced, either in your own columns or elsewhere, contravening Mrs. Stowe's "True Story;" neither do I care to render myself liable to a charge of throwing dust in my opponents' eyes by engaging with them on any side issue, such as the delicacy and good taste of this disclosure. What I have to say will be strictly to the point, and, so far as my perusal of everything written during the past week enables me to judge, will be entirely new. Postal arrangements will prevent this reaching you in time for your next number, but should any similar remarks appear in your Monday's issue, you will at once see by the date at which I dispatch this, that the coincidence is accidental and unavoidable on my part.

Firstly, as to the *prima facie* improbability of the supposed intrigue. The writer of "A Vindication" remarks that Augusta Byron was already a married woman. The *Saturday Review* mentions that her marriage took place in 1807. Those who credit Mrs. Stowe's account agree that previously to November, 1813, no imputation can be attached to her or Byron. She had, therefore, been a married woman *for six years*, and at the commencement of 1816, when, according to

Mrs. Stowe, their mutual infatuatiou was so violent that Byron, though conscious of his detection and trembling at the prospect of an exposure which must banish him from all civilised society, yet refused to abandon the intrigue: at this time Mrs. Leigh had been married *upwards of eight years.* Nor was she by any means so young as to countenance the story; she was *at least three years older than her brother*, and, if born at the beginning of 1783 (the *Saturday Review* says 1783 or 1784), no less than *five.* She was certainly in her 31st, perhaps in her 32nd year, before the intrigue *could* have commenced, while in 1816 she was perhaps no younger than thirty-three. Surely after so long a period of wedded life, surely at a time so far in advance of passionate and uncalculating girlhood, a time when, if not wholly, at least to a considerable extent—

> "The heyday of the blood is tame—'tis humble,
> And waits upon the judgment,"

it is almost beyond the limits of moral possibility that she would have consented, even (which is most unlikely), if he could have proposed, to carry on an intrigue so absolutely fatal. Yet the *Saturday Review*, though casually letting fall the dates which guides us to this irresistible conclusion, either from the most helpless want of judicial skill, or rather with that studied unfairness which characterises, as we shall see, other portions of the same article, omits to draw from these all important particulars the slightest deduction.

The writer of "A Vindication" may well open his eyes at "the astounding fact that Lady Byron allowed her own child to be called after the name of her husband's incestuous paramour." This only proves that up to the time when Augusta Ada Byron was christened her mother was ignorant of the intrigue; it does not show that the intrigue never existed, nor, I apprehend, did your critic advance it under such an impression. But look at the matter from another point of view and it *does* render the charge not only enormously improbable, but, I say it without hesitation, absolutely impossible in a man of Byron's nature; a man with a fiery conscience ceaselessly working beneath the gross outside crust of his character. *Would or could Byron have given his wife's child the name of his incestuous paramour?* Maliciously slandered and wilfully misjudged as he has been, I have yet to hear that he was destitute of *every* principle which we associate with civilised humanity.

Thus much for the *prima facie* incredibility of this accusation; I proceed to consider the evidence adduced by Mrs. Stowe, the *Saturday Review*, and other papers in its favour. The most prominent article of this evidence is that Byron wrote "Manfred" in the summer after separating from his wife. I emphatically protest against the shameful inaccuracy, shameful because the eternal reputation of a great man is at stake, of the *Saturday Review* in stating that "Manfred" was Byron's first literary work after leaving England. He embarked at the end of April, and in May began the third canto of "Childe Harold;" we shall presently see what reference he makes to his fraternal relations *there*. In June he wrote the "Prisoner of Chillon," and in July finished the canto of "Childe Harold," and composed nine other pieces, including the "Stanzas to Augusta" ("Though the day of my destiny's over"), and "Epistle to Augusta." "Manfred" *was not begun till September, nor finished till the following February.*

So much for the *Saturday's* accuracy: now for its logic. After alleging "Manfred" in support of Mrs. Stowe's charge, the reviewer proceeds:—"But this summer of 1816 was spent not only in writing 'Manfred,' but in Shelley's company, and Shelley at that very moment (*sic*) was engaged in writing the 'Revolt of Islam,' a direct and elaborate vindication of incest, and which, if we remember rightly, in its original form as 'Laon and Cythna,' was even more offensive than it now is."

What is the argument here enforced neither I, nor perhaps the reviewer himself, can tell, though he apparently thinks it very weighty. The drift may either be that Byron inspired Shelley with a love of incest, or that he sought Shelley's company knowing his opinions on that point to be congenial. How very fortunate for Leigh Hunt and the rest of Shelley's friends that *they* did not become the objects of Lady Byron's hallucination! for if so, would not the fact of their "spending the whole summer" with Shelley have been conclusive against them—at least in the eyes of a Saturday Reviewer?

But the *Saturday* has a a knack of cutting its own throat; never has it done so more notably than in the present instance. If "Laon and Cythna" was in progress during the whole summer, and "Manfred" was not begun till the autumn, the natural conclusion is that the incestuous part of the latter is due to the insensible operation of Shelley's poem

and reasoning upon Byron's thoughts. And then what becomes of the hypothesis that "Manfred" is founded on personal experience?

"We have heard an ingenious but over fanciful speculation," the reviewer continues, "that *Astarte*, the strange name of the incestuous sister in "Manfred," contains a sort of anagram of the principal letters of the name of Byron's half-sister. But this is probably a casual coincidence." Ingenious, quotha? *Astarte* contain the principal letters of *Augusta Maria?* Coincidence? *Probably* casual. *Now* we know how Mr. Gladstone finds so many lunatics in Ireland: it is the country to which Saturday Reviewers retire.

Byron himself supplies the strongest ground to believe that "Manfred" has nothing to do with Mrs. Leigh. Writing home from Venice, he says, "*As to the germs of it they may be found in the Journal which I sent Mrs. Leigh before I left Switzerland.* I have the whole scene of 'Manfred' before me as if it was but yesterday, and could point it out spot by spot, torrent and all." *Now, if the germs of "Manfred" were already known to Mrs. Leigh, why inform her of them in a Journal?*

The *Saturday* has been ransacking Byron's diaries and letters for some expression regarding his sister which may be tortured by prurient minds into capital of accusation against him. The search is an utter failure, so the searcher falls back on the assertion that there are other frequent passages in Byron's correspondence containing mention of Mrs. Leigh. How very extraordinary that a man should allude now and then to his sister! Only that in Byron's case the sole other instances where he speaks of her are in two letters to Murray, dated April 9 and 11, 1814:—

"Mrs. Leigh was very much pleased with her books, and desired me to thank you; she means, I believe, to write you her acknowledgments"

"I enclose you a letter*et* from Mrs. Leigh."

Is it possible that the reviewer could extract no *double entente* from these!

He has discovered an unknown and guilty melancholy in Byron's journal and letters from November, 1813, to May, 1814. I have read through that period of his memoirs twice most carefully, and fail to perceive anything according with such an hypothesis, whilst there is much inconsistent with it. The reviewer, however, has found the words "guess darkly,"

which, in his eye, point to some black mystery. The whole sentence is "Guess darkly, and you are sure not to err." It commences a letter to Tom Moore, and is evidently in answer to an inquiry as to when they should meet again, for Byron, immediately after the words above quoted, replies that he cannot tell. Yet the passage is cited to prove a horrible secret—verily, this is unique!

But the reviewer places his strongest reliance on the three poems addressed to Mrs. Leigh. From a piece containing 108 lines he garbles together, asterisks only intervening, some dozen of the very purest and most unexceptionable thoughts, in the hope that he may find some reader capable of putting an impure construction on them. He quotes part of the stanza beginning

> "My sister, my sweet sister, if a name
> Dearer and purer were, it should be thine."

The stanza *may* be, he says (and the admission is encouraging), merely the expression of fraternal love, but, read by the light of Mrs. Stowe's narrative, becomes susceptible of a very different interpretation. Yes, read by the *ignis fatuus* of a putrid and poisonous imagination, the utterances of an angel are not safe—from a Saturday Reviewer.

There is a remarkable passage in the third canto of "Childe Harold," the first poem written after Byron's farewell to Mrs. Leigh, which has escaped the writer of "A Vindication," as well as other critics.

Speaking of himself, the poet says—

> "Nor was all love shut from him, though his days
> Of passion had consumed themselves to dust."

And afterward proceeds thus—

> "And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
> Which unto his *was bound by stronger ties*
> *Than the Church links withal; and, though unwed,*
> THAT *love was pure, and, far above disguise,*
> *Had stood the test of mortal enmities,*
> *Still undivided, and cemented more*
> *By peril dreaded most in female eyes;*
> But this was firm and from a foreign shore,
> Well to that heart might his these absent greetings pour."

Now, sir, if Byron really had any guilty fear of suspicion, the terms here employed are so fervent as to render the lie a

dangerous one, which would be sure to excite that which it was his object to lull. If he was guilty, but had no fear, it was a needless and useless lie. The stanza was never written by a man stained with the sin which Lady Byron set to her husband's charge.

Those who have even moderately studied Byron's journals, correspondence, and works, will need no assurance that he was incapable of practising such long and systematic hypocrisy in praising his sister's purity, pitying and reproaching his wife, as that of which, if Mrs. Stowe's story *were* true, he must stand condemned. He had nothing of the hypocrite in his composition: all his vices, his follies, his frailties, almost all his thoughts, were exposed by him with an utter abnegation of self-pity to the gaze of his friends and the world. Had he been less moved by the candour of his conscience to reveal himself in the true nakedness of human nature, it would have been more fortunate for his fame, as it has been fortunate for that of many both before and after him.

Is it so surprising that he should write affectionately to his own sister, to the only near relative that he had left, the only being out of the sphere of his literary *confrères* who amid the "brute world's howling" clung to him, consoled him, counselled him? Surely the prudish precision of the *Saturday Review* will admit that this may be done by a man in Byron's position without his expressions being turned against him and her as evidence of a horrible and impure guilt. All who have read Byron know how susceptible of affection he was to every living thing that acted kindly to him; all know in what hyperbolical terms that affection was announced. Take the following extract from "Hours of Idleness":—

"In thee I fondly hoped to clasp
A friend whom death alone could sever;
Till envy, with malignant grasp,
Has torn thee from my breast for ever.
* * *
And when the grave restores her dead,
When life again to dust is given,
On thy dear breast I'll lay my head—
Without thee where would be my heaven?

For thee alone I lived, or wished to live;
Oh, God! if impious, this rash word forgive!
Heart-broken now, I wait an equal doom,
Content to join thee in thy turf-clad tomb;
Where, this frail form composed in endless rest,
I'll make my last cold pillow on thy breast;

That breast, where oft in life I've laid my head,
Will yet receive me mouldering with the dead;
This life resigned without one parting sigh,
Together in one bed of earth we'll lie!
Together share the fate to mortals given;
Together mix our dust and hope for Heaven."

There is nothing approaching the fervid exaggeration of these pieces throughout the remainder of Byron's poems, much less in those addressed to Mrs. Leigh. Yet the latter of them is an epitaph on a cottager's son, the former is addressed to Lord Delawarr.

That Byron married Miss Milbanke merely as a *pis aller* is disproved by the following entry in his private journal, bearing the date of March 15, 1814, a time when he is said to have been plunged in the depths of an intrigue with Mrs. Leigh, careless for all the world else. "A letter from Bella, which I answered. *I shall be in love with her again if I don't take care.*" It is worth notice that he replied to this letter the same day; also, be it remarked, that he did not force himself to love his future wife at the last moment, for this entry was made six months before he proposed to Miss Milbanke for the second time and was accepted.

That Lady Byron actually entertained the belief with which Mrs. Stowe accredits her I see no manner of reason to doubt, although as the able writer of "A Vindication" has shown, not until her child had been christened, and probably not until after she had seen her husband for the last time. My fixed opinion is that, smarting under conjugal differences, jealous of Byron's reliance on and love for his sister, and having her mind (as the consequence of that mother's trial she had recently suffered) more than ordinarily excitable and susceptible of the impressions which any designing wretch chose to plant in it; that under such circumstances she lent too ready an ear to the insinuations of that infernal creature who formed the subject of "A Sketch;" that these insinuations came to Byron's knowledge, but that, as he constantly averred, no charge in a tangible shape was ever addressed to him; that Lady Byron, further provoked by the poems sent to his sister from the Continent, and seeing in "Manfred" and "Cain" evidence of his guilt, refused to be reconciled to her husband, but refrained from accusing him to others because she had no direct *proof*.

This is my version. I support it from Lord Byron's own

—works, and from Mrs. Stowe's account. The words in "Childe Harold,"

> "That love was pure, and, *far above disguise*
> *Had stood the test of mortal enmities*
> *Still undivided, and cemented more*
> *By peril, dreaded most in female eyes.*"

I take to mean that their undisguised love had provoked the mortal enmities of Lady Byron and her confidante, and became perilous from the foul suspicion by them cast on it. I further allege in my support the line in "Stanzas to Augusta:"—

> "Though *slandered*, thou never couldst shake."

The whole of "A Sketch" confirms this view; so do the following portion of the "Lines" on hearing that his wife was ill:—

> "The significant eye
> Which learns to lie with silence—the pretext
> Of prudence, with advantages annexed—
> The acquiescence in all things which tend,
> No matter how, to the desired end—
> All found a place in thy philosophy."

Mrs. Stowe's narrative supports my opinion most strongly; it is pieced together so as to form an united whole from a casual aspect; apply the microscope to it, and it appears for the most part a disjointed huddle.

1. Note that Mrs. Stowe *never once says that Byron told his wife of his guilt*, but only that "there came an hour of revelation." Where she talks of the controversy between the two, it is not respecting *incest*, but his dictum that *infidelity* is pardonable in a married state.

2. Mrs. Stowe does not say that this "hour of revelation" preceded the last interview with Lord Byron; indeed the charge that he intended to drive his wife away (the surest means to bring about exposure), and the endearing terms of her letter *en route*, render that supposition impossible.

3. Mrs. Stowe does not say on whose evidence nor on what kind of evidence, the horrible accusation was based—only that it left no room for doubt. But what is conclusive to a strict, prejudiced, and jealous wife is not conclusive to an impartial person; facts which a prosecutor thinks open to no

doubt, a jury will often decide to be not only doubtful, but impossible.

4. Mrs. Stowe does not say that Mrs. Leigh ever acknowledged the imputation, nor when the alleged "unfortunate child of sin" was born.

5. Lady Byron's sudden and quite inexplicable fit of confidence in and reliance upon Mrs. Stowe, an entire stranger, makes it probable that she would place equal confidsnce in and reliance upon her own familiar attendant, the subject of "A Sketch," whether she were or were not worthy of it.

6. The morbid religionism which seems, from Mrs. Stowe's almost blasphemous laudation, to have characterised Lady Byron will, set side by side with the curious view which Mr. Howitt gives of her, and taken with the fact that her eldest grandson (madness is said to be inherited more by the second generation than the first) was stark mad, make her appear to any disinterested judge no unlikely subject for capricious prejudice and painful hallucination.—I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

E. B. NICHOLSON.

Trinity College, Oxford, Sept. 4.

From the DAILY TELEGRAPH, *September 8th.*

SIR,—Much has been said and written about Lord Byron and his sister Augusta. Perhaps the following short account may be acceptable :—The Hon. Augusta Byron married Colonel George Leigh, and they, during the reigns of George and William IV., lived in St. James's Palace, on the left side of the Quadrangle as you enter. This Colonel Leigh got into trouble in early life (but was acquitted) for having halted his regiment, after a steep ascent, under fire, to breathe the horses before charging and routing the enemy, much to the annoyance of some officers. He was well known to many noblemen and gentlemen as a guest of the late Duke of Rutland on the Derbyshire moors, &c. Lord Byron, on leaving England, sold Newstead Abbey, which he had previously left in his will to his sister Augusta. I give you a copy of a letter from this sister of a later date, which may enable you to form some kind of opinion of that lady; and I can only say that previous to and after the death of Lord Byron, that in conversation with the country gentlemen and his servant Fletcher (the former of whom were not over-

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partial to their neighbour) I never heard of the stigma so lately cast upon him and Augusta.

Might not Lady Byron, in the solitude and ruinous state of Newstead, as it then was, have been in a morbid state of mind, so easily acted upon? If so, can a disordered imagination be trusted? Did she really write what Mrs. Beecher Stowe gives her credit for? Most certainly the Rev. Francis Hodgson, late Provost of Eton, as Lord Byron's friend to the last, ought to be a sufficient refutation of this charge (particularly when husband, wife, and sister have passed from men's judgment). He would never have sanctioned incest.

Your's truly,

SHERWOOD (who knew Mary Chaworth, Augusta Byron, and part of Lady Byron's family, &c.).

"St. J. P., Aug. 1838.

"Dear Mr. ——, It is an age since I have written to you; the fact is, I have been ashamed to do so, or else too unhappy, and if you knew how much so, I think you would forgive me. I write now because I would not have you think I forgot your kindness, or that I was unmindful of my own omission. All that I can say is, that it has been quite out of my power to liquidate your claims on me, and very unhappy it makes me. My only hope is on some arrangement I contemplate with my eldest son; but such things take time. Dear Mr. ——, it is impossible to describe to you what I have suffered for some years. I must be composed of lead to be alive! At this moment I have more than enough of anxiety to kill a host. For three out of six remaining children, I am in the most overwhelming solicitude, and without that which could alone remedy in two instances, and mitigate in a third. There is always much to be thankful for, if one will seek for it, and I desire to be thankful for my many blessings, and resigned and patient under the dispensation of my life. I will not be so selfish as to dwell upon them. This letter is indeed written in the spirit of anxiety for what you must think of me. I fear you are angry, and yet I know I could not possibly help the cause. Heaven grant that I may ere long. I hope you and yours are as well as I wish, and if you would write and tell me about you all I should be very glad, for I can never cease to feel an interest on the subject or grateful for all your kindness to yours most truly obliged,

"(Signed) "AUG. LEIGH."

From the DAILY NEWS, *September 8th.*

Sir,—The odious narrative published by Mrs. Beecher Stowe in this month's *Macmillan* is awakening everywhere feelings of the strongest indignation. What need was there for it? What sufficient authorization had Mrs. Beecher Stowe for writing it, or the editor and publisher of the magazine for giving it the instant publicity of a wide ready-made circulation? These are questions which are beginning to be sternly asked of all parties concerned by the better and sounder portion of English society; and if no more sufficient answers can be given than those which the article itself supplies, these defacers of a mighty memory will yet have reason to repent of their handiwork.

What need was there for it? Those whose judgment is of value, all thinking persons of a certain age who move in the general or the literary society of this country, were in no danger, whatever Mrs. Beecher Stowe may think, in judging between Byron and his wife, of putting the blame on the wrong shoulders. Many doubtless knew the whole of the main facts, though not perhaps with all that minute circumstantiality to which she has kindly treated them; many more, among whom the writer of this was one, have for years felt morally certain that the whole affair was only explicable in some such way.* But English gentlemen, and much more English ladies, are wont to think that, when no end of justice or charity can be served by blackening the character of the dead, errors and vices of a certain kind had much better be covered up in oblivion. My father used to say that the best course, with reference to this class of sins, was *altum silentium*. As Scott said, "*premat nox alta.*" What need of this disclosure at all? The Memoirs of the Countess Guiccioli, lately published, supply, we are told, the sufficient cause. Really I think Mrs. Beecher Stowe had no business to read the Memoirs of the Countess Guiccioli. An improper person, though the mistress of a great poet, has no claim to be heard except in the character of a Magdalene; and this character I understand (for I have not read the book, and do not intend

* This conviction I myself arrived at by connecting *one* of the "ten or twenty different accounts of the separation" which Macaulay speaks of as current, then and since, in society, with the passages in "Cain" quoted by Mrs. Beecher Stowe, and also with a passage to be found at p. 129, vol. vi., of Lockhart's Life of Sir Walter Scott.

to) is far enough from being assumed by the Countess. But to suppose that anything that the Countess Guiccioli might say could injure the fair fame of Lady Byron is to give way to the wildest delusion. Injure it, I mean to say, in the minds of people whose judgment is worth having. The *Satirist* used to destroy hopelessly the character of many eminent persons in the minds of a certain public, just as the *Queen's Messenger* does now. But it did not occur to the friends of Lady A. or Lord B., whom the *Satirist* might have assailed with its foul inuendoes, to rush to their vindication by sending full particulars of the private villanies of Lord A. and Lady B. to the next number of *Blackwood's Magazine*. And why? Because they knew that the public of the *Satirist* was one not worth conciliating or enlightening. Just so, whatever may be said by the Countess Guiccioli about or against Lady Byron, the proper attitude for any real friend of the latter to take is one of contemptuous silence; those who could be influenced by anything she might say are not worth the trouble of convincing to the contrary. Only hopeless ignorance of the real state of opinion among the cultivated and well-informed, not only in England but also in France and Germany, could have led Mrs. Beecher Stowe to suppose that the Countess Guiccioli had "the ear of the public" in any sense which should render it necessary for the friends of Lady Byron to interfere for her vindication.

The next question that must be asked is a most serious one —*What sufficient authorisation* had Mrs. Beecher Stowe for writing this article? It will not do to assert vaguely that Lady Byron, thirteen years ago, sought an interview with her, and after communicating to her all this terrible history, desired her opinion as to the suggestion of her friends, that it might have become incumbent upon her to make the facts known. Mrs. Beecher Stowe nowhere distinctly asserts that Lady Byron authorised *her* to publish, either at the time of the disclosure or afterwards, the facts of which she had become cognizant: the question put to Mrs. Beecher Stowe was, whether or not *Lady Byron* should publish them. Suppose that Mrs. Beecher Stowe had counselled publication; Lady Byron would still have had the power of deciding finally whether or not to comply with that advice; and I firmly believe that, when it came to the point, she would have let herself be torn by wild horses sooner than consent to blacken with the stains of indelible, and, in human eyes, inexpiable guilt, the memory of the man whom, as Mrs. Beecher Stowe

takes pains to inform us, she still ardently loved, and even of whose eternal salvation she felt assured. No; this task has been left to Mrs. Beecher Stowe; and the countrymen of Byron have a right to demand from her a full and explicit statement of the authority under which she has undertaken it. To me it seems that nothing short of a paper in Lady Byron's handwriting, expressly authorising her to give publicity, according to her own discretion, to the story of which she had been made the recipient, could justify Mrs. Beecher Stowe in assuming the responsibility of publication. As to saying that there is no one now alive whom the disclosure could pain, the notion is absurd. There are scores of Byrons still in being, as a glance at the Peerage will show; and there are also direct descendants of the poet. Nothing short of the direst provocation, if it were the principal, or the most explicit instructions, if it were an agent, could clear of wanton cruelty towards all these persons the act of fouling their great kinsman's name five and forty years after his death with a load of needless and, as I shall show, *exaggerated* infamy.

With regard to the substance of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's disclosures, I have a very few words to say. It would be easy—and I hope that some one will undertake it—to demolish a great deal of the tissue of injurious representation with which the writer, as if seeking grounds and excuses for her own procedure by exaggerating to herself Byron's errors, invests the relations of the poet towards Lady Byron after the separation. "Lady Byron is represented as Donna Inez," we are told, "and Lord Byron as Don José," and then a long but garbled extract is given from the first canto of "Don Juan." But in the name of the Muses and of common sense, is not this rather too bad? Mrs. Stowe, as an accomplished writer of fiction, must know the procedure of persons gifted with imagination well enough; in their creations they do not give us close servile copies of the persons or things in nature, but inweave two or three traits belonging to one character with two or three more belonging to another, and others perhaps which have no existence save in their own teeming conceptions. Thus, in the case before us, though there are certain stanzas which look as if Donna Inez were meant for his own wife, there are others in which the likeness to his mother is just as striking. For instance—

"His parents [Donna Inez and Don José] ne'er agreed except in doting
Upon the most unquiet imp on earth."

Will that suit Lady Byron? Or take the account of her

superintendence of Juan's education, to whom does it most naturally apply, to Lady Byron or to his mother?

> "Sermons he read, and lectures he endured,
> And homilies and lives of all the saints."

Who is not reminded by these lines of the volumes of Tillotson's sermons, which his mother made the young poet swallow, and of the minute scriptural teaching which he received from her, or by her desire? I do not say that there are not ill-natured things in this picture of Donna Inez, and things which Byron ought not to have written; but to say "Donna Inez *is* Lady Byron," is to misrepresent the case altogether.

Then, as to the terrible fact itself, need Mrs. Beecher Stowe have made it out worse than it was—if, indeed, it was. Might she not have said that the "blood relation" was a relation of the *half*-blood only?—a fact surely of some importance. Might she not have added that they were not brought up together, and did not meet until both were grown up? These are things which it strikes one at once to say; and I do not doubt that much more might be urged by one thoroughly acquainted with the case from Byron's side. But—and this is a great aggravation of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's grievous error—those memoirs which Byron bequeathed to Moore for publication, and which are known to have contained his version in full of the circumstances of the marriage and separation, were, in accordance with the decision of the executors, destroyed. No one can blame them for this; they thought, and were justified in thinking by all that they had ever heard and seen of English society, that the time would never come when professing champions of Lady Byron would fling *this* missile against her husband; they, therefore, deemed it unnecessary and unkind to preserve his defence of himself—a defence which, doubtless, contained much that was morbid and shocking, and inadmissible at the bar even of the most candid and tolerant opinion. They could not look forward to the commixture of nationalities in the London society of the present day,

> "Syrus in Tiberim defluxit Orontes":

the Tweed and Mississppi freely mingling with our classic Thames, nor estimate the force of the monthly necessity for "something spicy," nor foresee what the representatives of a virtuous democracy might deem it their duty to do, to demo-

lish the reputation, or what was left of it, of a vicious aristocrat.

Lastly, what good cause is served by these disclosures? Not certainly the cause of morality. If Byron's had been a life of prosperous wickedness; if he had not been cut off in the prime of his years and the fulness of his powers; if he had not been haunted by remorse and ennui; if the cup of pure glory which he seemed at last about to taste had not been suddenly and for ever dashed from his lips—had all this been other than it was, there might have been some justification for disclosing so terrible a fall of a spirit so mighty, lest others should attempt to live over again his life. But the Nemesis was complete; just embarked on an enterprise which, had it been carried out, would have enshrined him in the popular imagination along with the heroic names of the mythical founders and benefactors of old Hellas, Byron died; the task was too pure for hands like his. Heaven avenged its outraged laws, and did not leave the retribution for Mrs. Beecher Stowe to inflict in the year 1869. To those who are capable of feeling and of judging, these disclosures will not alter one iota in the estimate which they have long since formed of Byron's work and character. But on the *Satirist* public in all the earth, with its prurience, its haste, its bondage to words, its irrationality, the impression made will doubtless be proportionate to Mrs. Beecher Stowe's expectations. To *them* Byron will henceforth simply be—I will not finish the sentence; but the ignoble vulgar in all lands will. It is for this reason that I protest with all my strength against the act which Mrs. Beecher Stowe and the editor of *Macmillan* have committed, because among millions of half-instructed minds, for centuries to come, it ensures that, not justice, but infinitely less than justice, will be done to the character of one of England's great men.

I am, &c
T. ARNOLD.

Oxford, September 6th.

Letter of Lord Wentworth.—From the PALL MALL GAZETTE, *Sept. 10th.*

Sir,—In your number of Sept. 3 you say that Mrs. Stowe is not a flagrant offender against proprieties, because my sister and I are supposed to have intended to publish correspondence relating to Lord and Lady Byron's conjugal differences.

Now, supposing Mrs. Stowe's narrative to have been really a "true story," and that we had meant to reveal the whole of our grandmother's history, I do not see what defence that is to Mrs. Stowe against the charge of repeating what was told her in a "private, confidential conversation."

But it is not true that Lady Anne Blunt and I ever intended to publish correspondence of the nature mentioned. About three years ago a manuscript in Lady Noel Byron's handwriting was found among her papers, giving an account of some circumstances connected with her marriage, and apparently intended for pnblication after her death; but as this seemed not quite certain, no decision as to its publication was come to. In the event of a memoir being written, this manuscript might, perhaps, be included; but hitherto it has not been proposed to publish any other matter about her separation.

This statement in Lady Byron's own handwriting does not contain any accusation of so grave a nature as that which Mrs. Stowe asserts was told her, and Mrs. Stowe's story of the separation is inconsistent with what I have seen in various letters, &c., of Lady Byron's.

Lady Byron says in her own statement that before being published it ought to be submitted to some person who had read through the consumed Byron memoirs, so as to secure the correction of any misstatements. I cannot see that Messrs. Wharton and Fords make no charge of material inaccuracy against Mrs. Stowe; I believe they meant to assert the inaccuracy of the whole article. I, for one, cannot allow that Mrs. Stowe's statement is substantially correct (according to your inference and that of one or two other newspapers).

Requesting the favour of the insertion of my explanation in your valuable journal,

I remain, your obedient servant,

WENTWORTH.

Boulogne, Sept. 7, 1869.

From the SATURDAY REVIEW, *September 11th.*

Very little of the least value is to be extracted from the seething cauldron of excited, but aimless, talk which has overflowed the columns of all the newspapers on the Byron mystery during the past week. The case stands as nearly as possible where it stood, and there moreover it is perhaps likely to stand for ever. Lord Lindsay's important letter is the

single new contribution to the facts of the case, and embodies authentic information on Lord Byron's married life and his general character, taken from Lady Anne Barnard's contemporaneous memoir. On this letter we propose to comment at some length. Everything else which has been said, being either a mere repetition of the same arguments, or wholly irrelevant, may be summarily dismissed. Those who, like ourselves, have, with whatever reluctance, been driven to the conclusion that on the whole the charge made against Lord Byron is likely to be true, because the moral probabilities against its truth seem to be outweighed be the probabilities, however disagreeable, for its truth, can treat with contemptuous indifference the tedious iteration of the paralogism that Lord Byron could not have committed a certain crime because he wrote very fine poems. And yet the majority of the writers in the newspapers harp upon no other string. For ourselves, we shall not enter into controversy with fervid undergraduates, who in the middle of the Long Vacation date from Trinity College, Oxford, nor with the impertinent and utterly untrue suggestion of another newspaper correspondent, that the writer on Byron's Life in *Temple Bar* and the writer in the *Saturday Review* are one and the same; but we content ourselves with reviewing the case as it stands at the moment. We may premise that we have at least a right to demand that Lord Byron's apologists should take a definite, precise, logical ground, and stick to it. What they do is to play at fast and loose with the case, and ask us to accept with equal implicitness vindications wholly irreconcilable. One writer, for example, says that the charge of incest was invented by Mrs. Stowe in 1869; another that it was rife in 1817, and was met by Lord Byron at the time in one of his poems. On the hand, a Colonel Massey comes forward with a wonderful tale that Byron told him of an adulterous intrigue carried on during his honeymoon, of which he made his sister the screen, and which was perfectly well known to Lady Byron; while another writer quotes Byron's own repeated assurance that from first to last he never could divine the reason why his wife deserted him.

First, we are thankful to record the unanimous and most severe condemnation which has been passed, both here and in America, on Mrs. Stowe's conduct. This condemnation has been passed with entire independence; and the American journals protested against the article in the *Atlantic Monthly*,

when it was first printed, with the same vehemence of censure which was with one voice raised in England on its appearance in *Macmillan's Magazine* in September. Here at any rate we, and those literary organs which most strongly dissent from our views on the charge of incest, are entirely at one. Mrs. Stowe has been guilty of a scandalous breach of faith as regards Lady Byron, and of extremely bad taste. She has been, we fear, actuated in making her revelation by motives which we had rather not characterize, and she has let loose a flood of immoral talk and immoral speculation on loathsome subjects which has deeply defiled, and will long defile, European and American society. As to the editor of *Macmillan's Magazine*, it was a purely commercial speculation. He merely forestalled the English market; if one London magazine did not reprint Mrs. Stowe, another would. We are not of those who think that the publication of the true story of Byron would be in itself harmful; rather the reverse. Our objection is to the time and the manner, not to the matter. The greater Byron's fame and powers, the greater right has the world to know the true man. But that revelation, we think, ought to have been made in 1816; it ought to have been made by Lady Byron herself, or at any rate on her express and undoubted authority, and by those commissioned to execute this stern judicial act. But to get it at this time, and in this indirect and surreptitious way, in a form so nauseous, from such a source, and for such objects, is a proceeding which we are glad to say has met with almost universal indignation, contempt, and condemnation.

On the whole we may assume that, as the case stands, general opinion has come to the conclusion that, as a matter of fact, Lady Byron did in substance make a communication to Mrs. Stowe, of which we have in Mrs. Stowe's paper the general, and in the main faithful, outline. Ill as we think of Mrs. Stowe, we do not believe that out of her own lively imagination she either invented the tale, or misunderstood Lady Byron on the main matter—the charge of incest.

The great fact, then, scarcely disputed, is that in 1856 Lady Byron believed the tale which she revealed to Mrs. Stowe. The question then arises—Was this belief a gradual and morbid accretion, or did Lady Byron entertain it—whether true or not—in 1815-16? This is the point to which Lord Lindsay, writing in the *Times* of September 7, has addressed himself. His conclusion is, that either Mrs. Stowe in 1856

"entirely misunderstood Lady Byron, and has thus been led into error and misstatement"—an allegation which seems to us entirely improbable, and to which as a mere matter of argument we should much prefer the bold assertion that Mrs. Stowe had wilfully and maliciously invented the whole story from first to last, which we do not for a moment believe—or "that under the pressure of a lifelong and secret sorrow, Lady Byron's mind had become clouded with an hallucination in respect to the particular point in question." That is to say, Lord Lindsay's position as regards Lady Byron is, that this hallucination—whatever an hallucination is—was a recent thing, or anyhow did not possess Lady Byron forty years ago, and that the charge of incest preferred by her against her husband in 1856 was of recent growth, or at any rate was not entertained in 1816; and to prove this point Lord Lindsay refers to a very curious contemporaneous diary, kept by Lady Anne Barnard, embodying a letter from Lady Byron herself written in 1818, and expressly referring to the separation and its causes. What does this memoir and what does this letter amount to? Simply to this, that in 1818 Lady Byron did not mention the charge of incest, which is precisely what Mrs. Stowe and Lady Byron admit. Lady Byron's position was, according to Mrs. Stowe, that she never did divulge the real state of the case to anybody—except perhaps to her parents, and to Dr. (then Mr.) Lushington, in 1816; but that for some reasons, which we do not profess quite to understand, and certainly not to acquiesce in, she kept the secret inviolate and sacred. This is what Mrs. Stowe says; and forty years before Lady Byron herself, according to Lady Anne Barnard, says, "that she silenced accusations by which her own conduct might have been more fully justified." There is no inconsistency whatever between the fact that Lady Byron never did mention the matter to her dearest friend, and Mrs. Stowe's —or rather Lady Byron's—assertion that this was, however strange and perhaps objectionable, Lady Byron's fixed intention and purpose from the very first. We do not profess to understand Lord Lindsay's logic, though we have great admiration for his character and respect for his motives in writing. But what he says seems to come to this—Lady Byron in 1816 and 1818 never said a word about a certain circumstance. Mrs. Stowe says that Lady Byron in 1856 acknowledged or boasted that she had never said a word about it, either in 1816 or 1818, or indeed until 1856. From which Lord Lindsay con-

cludes that Lady Byron did not, in 1816-1818, believe in the existence of a fact which she says she first made known in 1856.

But there is a good deal more in Lady Anne Barnard's diary than this. Lady Byron, according to Mrs. Stowe, in 1856 revealed not only the tale of incest, but several other matters; for example, the scene in the carriage on the wedding-day, and the particulars, down to the sensational details, including the spaniel dog story, of the final interview between Byron, his wife, and sister. Now we must say that, horrible and disgusting as the incest charge is, as a mere matter of probability, the carriage scene on the wedding-day is even more improbable. But this very incident, the most improbable in the whole of Mrs. Stowe's narrative, is confirmed by Lady Anne's testimony. Lady Byron told this story in 1818 to Lady Anne, and she told it again in 1856 to Mrs. Stowe. Here is another undesigned coincidence between Lady Byron's assertions in 1818 and in 1856, which also goes far to prove that in 1856 she believed neither more nor less than she believed in 1818. "He, Lord Byron, soon attempted to corrupt her [Lady Byron's] principles, both with respect to her own conduct and her latitude for his."—*Lady A. Barnard.* "He repudiated Christianity as authority, asserted the right of every human being to follow out what he called 'the impulses of nature.' . . . . His first attempt had been to make her an accomplice by sophistry; by destroying her faith in Christianity and confusing her sense of right and wrong, to bring her into the ranks of those convenient women who regard the marriage tie only as a friendly alliance to cover licences on both sides."—*Mrs. Stowe.* Lord Lindsay's plea for Byron is well-intentioned, but the advocate has done his client more harm than even Mrs. Stowe herself.

We cannot but regard Lady Anne's testimony in 1818 as a direct, and the stronger because perfectly undesigned, confimation of Lady Byron's assertions in 1856. The character, too, which Lady Byron, writing to Lady Anne, draws of her husband is substantially the same as, or painted even in blacker hues than, what she recalls of him forty years afterwards, when she tells the whole story. And we must be permitted to add that, if incest is a possible crime at all, the Byron described by his wife, and by his wife's confidential friend in 1818, is certainly not the person to whom such a crime is impossible.

Lord Lindsay has something else to say. He admits that

Lady Byron's solicitors, Messrs. Wharton and Fords, do not contradict Mrs. Stowe's allegation, and he feels this fact to be strong, and to raise an inconvenient presumption in favour of Mrs. Stowe's story. It is strong, but it is stronger than Lord Lindsay admits it to be. Lady Byron's executors and representatives obviously commissioned and authorised the letter of the solicitors, and there was in their possession documentary evidence which, though it might not prove Lady Byron's charge—which, after all, must depend upon Lady Byron's own character and veracity—might have disproved Mrs. Stowe's story. The conclusion is obvious, that Lady Byron left behind her nothing whatever inconsistent either with Mrs. Stowe's story in general, or with Mrs. Stowe's assertion in particular, that Lady Byron in 1816 believed, and acted on the belief of, the truth of the charge which she divulged in 1856. If such materials for contradicting either of these two assertions of Mrs. Stowe are in the possession of Lady Byron's descendants at the present moment, it is perfectly impossible to understand why they have not been made use of.

Something else remains to be said. It is admitted on all hands that in 1816 Lady Byron communicated to Mr. Lushington what at that moment Lady Byron believed, or affected to believe, was the real state of the case. The question then is—What did Lady Byron reveal to Mr. Lushington? No doubt, if she told Mr. Lushington of the incest, this would not prove that the incest had been committed; but it is superfluous to add that it would prove to demonstration that in 1816 Lady Byron believed, and said, that it had been committed. Dr. Lushington has kept silence. If Lady Byron in 1816 made the charge of incest to her professional adviser, Dr. Lushington is not called upon or expected to say so. But if this is not what Lady Byron said in 1816—if she said something else, and made some other complaint against Lord Byron, no matter what—Dr. Lushington might fairly say that what he was told in 1816 is not the tale which Mrs. Stowe has told in 1869. This is just what Dr. Lushington has not done; and on this point also we find no contradiction as to Lady Byron's original and her more recent assertion on the matter of fact. We are therefore driven to our second conclusion, that in 1856 Lady Byron added nothing to what she is asserted to have believed in 1816. By a legitimate critical process, the matter has been traced backward to its source. Lady Byron may have had all along no ground for making the charge of

incest; she may have completely misunderstood and calumniated her husband; she may have had only trifling incompatibilities of temper to complain of. But, be this as it may, what she thought and said in 1856 she thought and said in 1816.

We dismiss very rapidly the "hallucination" theory. Its controversial value seems, in the eyes of the newspaper correspondents, chiefly to depend on the importance which they attach to a sonorous polysyllable. We do not profess altogether to understand an hallucination of any sort, certainly not of this sort—an hallucination which involves so horrible a charge, and which surrounds such a charge with all sorts of minute, and perfectly unnecessary, details. Lady Byron's character, as she and her friends give it, is one with which we do not altogether sympathise; indeed we rather dislike, because perhaps we are unable to realise it. But that her character was very peculiar Lady Anne Barnard shows as clearly as Mrs. Stowe does. That character, be it what it may, is one, we should say, *prima facie*, least capable of being led away by, or indulging in, an hallucination—whatever hallucinations may be. The upshot of the whole matter and the final alternative is this:—Either we must accept this hallucination theory, or we must accept Lady Byron's story. Further than this the matter cannot be carried.

P.S.—In our last week's article on this subject, "Lady Carnarvon" was a misprint for "Lady Carmarthen." And we may add that we are assured on good authority that the statement, which we took from Moore's Memoirs, that Lord Byron and his half-sister Augusta scarcely ever met in their early years, is incorrect. The two children, we are informed, were brought up together by Byron's mother in the days of her Scotch poverty. A daughter, unmarried, of Mrs. Leigh, we are told, still survives.

From the DAILY NEWS, *September 13th.*

Sir,—A considerable amount of discussion having now taken place on the Byron question, and there appearing a great danger of the vital points of the controversy being buried under a multitude of words, I beg once more to recall the public attention to a few plain facts, on which the foundations of the whole dispute rest. The great fundamental fact is, that all the dark and revolting charges against Lord Byron are avowed to proceed from the very person who,

before making them, took care to destroy the evidence of the person against whom they are made. That is, Lady Byron, during the life of her husband, had sternly refused to make any explanation to him, or to the public, of the causes of her separation. If she had any to make, the proper time to do that was whilst her husband was living, and, if not true, could have rebutted them. She should have done this or for ever after held her peace. But when her husband was dead, and died with the hundred times repeated declaration of his ignorance of her reasons for leaving him; when she had accomplished the destruction of her husband's statement of his side of the question, and then written, as we are informed, her own representation of it; when all those who knew him best, who had his full confidence, and could best defend him, had followed him to the tomb, we find her, in open breach of her solemnly reiterated assertions of an inviolable silence on the subject, coming out, if Mrs. Stowe's story be true, with the most damning calumnies which it is possible for a woman to utter against her husband. I beg to ask once more whether it be the opinion of the justice-loving British public that this style of conduct can for a moment receive its sanction? If a practice of this kind can be tolerated, then will no man's reputation be safe from "the wife of his bosom." Any wife with a pique may, the moment that the breath is out of her husband's body, rifle his cabinets, overhaul the most sacred records of his past life, and then with impunity proceed to blacken his memory with the most odious pigments of hell. This, however, is precisely what the zealous advocates of Lady Byron's unwarrantable proceeding recommend to us as admissible. I have no hesitation in asserting that it is a proceeding as odious, as abhorrent to every right feeling, as opposed to and destructive of every principle that is sacred in life, as it is pre-eminently un-English. I repeat it, that the moment that Lady Byron caused to be destroyed the memoir of her husband she put herself out of court on the question, and rendered it impossible that it can ever be settled except upon defective and exparte evidence.

Beyond this primal fact, which ought to stand for ever broadly, strongly, and uneclipsed by verbiage or sophistry before the public eye, it is scarcely worth while to go; but there are one or two minor facts made patent by recent correspondence. It is perfectly clear, from the letters of Lady Anne Barnard and Lady Byron, quoted by Lord Lindsay, and made

still more palpable by the important statements of "An American Citizen" in the *Times* of the 8th inst., that for years after the separation Lady Byron had no idea of any such crime as Mrs. Stowe makes her allege against Lord Byron thirteen years ago. There is not a shadow of a shade of any such cause assigned for the separation. The causes enumerated are violent conduct, affected insanity, and general licentiousness. That Lord Byron had no idea of any such charge on her part the "American Citizen" satisfactorily shows from his intercourse with Moore; that Lady Byron had no such idea, the fact, so well observed, of her naming her infant daughter after Augusta Leigh is most conclusive proof. If Lady Byron afterwards fell into such a belief, it must have been from the fiendish insinuations of some base person like the woman "born in a garret, in the kitchen bred."

One more fact. The writers, English and American, who claim for Mrs. Stowe the peculiar and almost exclusive confidence of Lady Byron on this subject, are dealing in mere fudge. It is well known to a certain number of persons that Lady Byron, with all her affected strength of character, had the weaknses to make such confidantes of most of her lady friends of long standing. Most of these ladies are now dead, and prudently "died and made no sign." But there is one at least still living who possesses a series of letters from Lady Byron, containing, not horrors of the Beecher Stowe type, but heavy charges not only against her husband, but against her own daughter.

What are we to do with a person at once so virtuous and so vituperative—so saintly in one corner of her mind, and harbouring in another that which does not spare even her own flesh and blood? What are we to say to the noble reticence of a wife who destroys her dead husband's defence, outwaits his remaining friends, and then furnishes to her lady adherents all round a sheaf of poisoned arrows, to be shot off when not an opposing shield can be raised against them? It is the story of Orpheus over again—torn to pieces by a mob of infuriated women!

Certain anonymous correspondents talk of Byron being "now unmasked." He was the very last man to wear a mask. His faults lay from first to last open to the day. We *know* no more positively of him now than we did. We have no *proof whatever*; only one-sided assertions; but much

counter proof; and we are bound to characterise this attempt to swear away his literary and moral character—such as it was—as most monstrous. I have no desire to condemn Lady Byron. No one honours certain parts of her character more than I do; but she has condemned herself by her breach of her once honourable silence, and by the irreparable wrong done to Byron by the destruction of his justificatory case.

Once more, and finally, for with this I close my earnest protest on this subject, I exhort you, my countrymen, to revert to and to hold fast and immoveably by those great principles of justice which have distinguished us in all ages. "No man," says our law and our deepest moral sentiment, "shall be condemned unheard." But if Lord Byron be condemned it must be unheard. His lady has murdered him in his sleep in the last great sleep as it regards this world. She has stifled his voice from the tomb. And let her not persuade you, under these circumstances, that even his poetry is a sham, an empty, theatric impersonation studiously got up for effect. In whatever he wrote Byron was only too real. At midnight, over his gin-and-water, penning "Don Juan," his mind floated in the sphere of a lawless world and its reminiscences. When he wrote his dark dramas of "Cain" and "Manfred" he was anxiously endeavouring to probe those gloomy mysteries of a corrupted human nature, which Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe had explored before him, and, contemporaneously, Shelley, yet with no man accusing them of incest. In "Childe Harold" he shut out the lower and injurious world and its associations, and rose into a nobler and purer element. He ascended into rapport with the spirit of the august and eternal mountains, and their sublime sense of purity and awe. A voice of loftiest inspiration, a loving, genuine voice of man's highest and noblest aspirations then awoke in him. In that spirit he wrote one of the sweetest and noblest poems which live in any language—a poem which breathes the true trumpet tones of imperishable freedom; a tone of God's and man's justice to universal man, a glorious heritage of our language and our common nature; a tone even of religion with which the mathematical mediocrity which now seeks to crush him could never sympathize, because it could not live up and into it.

Great, immense allowances are to be made for a man like Byron, struggling with a blood and constitution infected by a mad and wicked ancestry. It might be a great misfortune

for Lady Byron to marry such a man—which she did with her eyes open—but it was a terrible one for him to marry a woman who could desert him living and defame him dead. Poor Byron! But spite of all nature's and woman's wrongs; spite of all defamatory efforts, his best sentiments shall animate our children to the love of liberty, of nature, and of patriotism as long as the nation and its language last. And if they descend to his less hallowed themes, they will do it at their own peril and responsibility, as they do when they indulge in the grossnesses of Ovid and Catullus, of Sterne and Smollett, of Voltaire, Rabelais, and Paul de Kock; or wilfully seek the scenes of the degraded life of our present corrupted cities.

With these words I close my part in this controversy, and wait for the authoritative words of those few who are now the only ones in a position to pronounce them.

I am, &c.,

WILLIAM HOWITT.

Penmaenmaur, September 10.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

WE have now placed before our readers everything of importance that has been written upon the questions raised by the appearance of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's article in this month's number of *Macmillan's Magazine*, and thus afforded them an opportunity of forming their own conclusions upon the *merits of the case;* to this we propose to append a few remarks of our own, upon the various issues raised by different writers in discussing the question. With the extracts from the papers of Saturday, September 11, the case is made complete, the only person to whom we can look for further information is Mrs. Stowe, as it is understood the solicitors of Lady Byron's family are not instructed to add anything more to their statement, published in the *Times* on the 2nd instant; and Mrs. Stowe, we think, has conferred upon us the right, if not, indeed, imposed the duty, of demanding a further and full explanation from her, of all circumstances and details attendant upon her statement of Lady Byron's disclosures to her. That her publication of what she has termed the "True Story of Lady Byron's Life," has created an unparalleled amount of excitement and discussion everybody knows; and

Mrs. Stowe's version of the real causes of the separation of Lord Byron from his wife, has been received very differently by various commentators upon the affair. Some of the writers in the leading journals and reviews have at once, and with the most perfect simplicity, accepted Mrs. Stowe's statements in their entirety; whilst another equally well-informed and discriminating section of the press has rejected, with promptness and spirit, the foul slur cast upon the name and character of Lord Byron. Of these writers, some charge the misrepresentation upon Lady Byron, and others upon Mrs. Stowe. The latter argue that Lady Byron never made any such statement and disclosure to the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin;" the former that Lady Byron wholly misunderstood her husband's character and his inuendoes against his own morality; and was deceived by them and induced to believe he had committed some fearful crime which her own mind ultimately resolved into the charge she brought against him.

It is stated that the article that appeared in the *Times*, accepting all Mrs. Stowe's statements, was from the pen of the Hon. Mrs. Norton, and in accordance with its usual policy, viz., writing consonantly with public opinion, the *Times* published a leader, a few days afterwards, admitting that there was much to be said on the other side. The *Saturday Review* also accepted Mrs. Stowe's account, as the true version of the affair, whilst the *Standard* published an elaborate and able vindication of the poet's character. There is no doubt that at this moment there is a strong disposition to disbelieve Mrs. Stowe's—or Lady Byron's—version of the matter, and that there is in the public mind a vast amount of sympathy for Lord Byron's fame and memory. The new editor of *Macmillan* has made his accession to the editorial chair remarkable by the publication of an article, which everybody agrees ought never to have been either written or published, and has speedily brought the September number of *Macmillan* to a fifth edition.

The writer of the article is also charged, without the slightest degree of reason or fairness, with having published her story merely to rehabilitate her fading reputation and to create a new "sensation." We acquit Mrs. Stowe of any such motives, and believe she acted, as she says she acted, purely with a view to counteract the influence, real or supposed, of the Countess Guiccioli's "Recollections;" but

whatever may have been the influence of that book upon opinion in America, we can assure Mrs. Stowe, its effect upon the estimation in which Lady Byron's character was held in England has been small indeed.

It is stated that the germ of Mrs. Stowe's revelation had already appeared in an able and temperate article in *Temple Bar*, published three months ago; and Mrs. Stowe herself says that the facts she discloses were well known long ago to a certain section of English society; to some extent this may be true, but there is no denying the fact that her explicit and open charge against Lord Byron was new to the majority of English people. Some of the writers upon the question see a vast amount of circumstantial evidence against Lord Byron, and in support of Mrs. Stowe's statement in the poems of Lord Byron himself; but in our opinion there is comparatively little dependence to be placed upon such internal evidence. Lord Byron's mind was peculiarly dark and gloomy; there is not in all his writings one bit of honest fun; he gave us satire enough, but no mirth; no broad hearty laughter is to be got out of his poetry. At the very time of which Mrs. Stowe writes, Lady Byron was engaged in investigating her husband's sanity. In his "Life of Lord Byron," Moore says, "Lady Byron had left London at the latter end of January, on a visit to her father's house in Leicestershire, and Lord Byron was in a short time to follow her; they had parted in the utmost kindness; she wrote him a letter full of playfulness and affection on the road, and immediately on her arrival at Kirby Mallory her father wrote to acquaint Lord Byron that she would return to him no more. At the time when he had to stand this unexpected shock his pecuniary embarrassments, which had been fast gathering around him during the whole of the past year, had arrived at their utmost."

There is no doubt that at this time Byron's circumstances were desperate; his affairs were dreadfully involved, and there is no wonder that he wished his wife to leave London as soon as possible, for his house was full of executions. But we have his wife's own account of the state of his affairs at this time, and she appears on her own statement to have believed he was insane, and never hints at any of the dark crimes with which, according to Mrs. Stowe, she subsequently charged him.

Lady Byron says, "The facts are: I left London for Kirby Mallory, the residence of my father and mother, on the 15th

of January, 1816. Lord Byron had signified to me in writing (January 6th) his absolute desire that I should leave London on the earliest day that I could conveniently fix. It was not safe for me to undertake the fatigue of a journey sooner than the 15th. Previously to my departure, *it had been strongly impressed on my mind that Lord Byron was under the influence of insanity.* This opinion was derived in a great measure from the communications made to me by his nearest relatives, and personal attendant, who had more opportunities than myself of observing him during the latter part of my stay in town. It was even represented to me that he was in danger of destroying himself. *With the concurrence of his family* I had consulted Dr. Baillie as a friend (January 8th) respecting this supposed malady. On acquainting him with the state of the case, and with Lord Byron's desire that I should leave London, Dr. Baillie thought that my absence might be advisable as an experiment, *assuming* the fact of mental derangement; for Dr. Baillie, not having had access to Lord Byron, could not pronounce a positive opinion on that point. He enjoined that in correspondence with Lord Byron I should avoid all but light and soothing topics. Under these impressions I left London, determined to follow the advice given by Dr. Baillie."

This is a very satisfactory account from Lady Byron herself of what her belief was at the time of the separation. This account is corroborated by her husband, who says, "I was surprised one day by a doctor (Dr. Baillie) and a lawyer (Dr. Lushington) almost forcing themselves at the same time into my room. I did not know till afterwards the real object of their visit. I thought their questions singular, frivolous, and somewhat importunate, if not impertinent; but what should I have thought if I had known that they were sent to provide proofs of my insanity? . . . . . I do not, however, tax Lady Byron with this transaction, probably she was not privy to it. She was the tool of others. Her mother always detested me, and had not even the decency to conceal it in her house."

And this is what all the world knew of the matter before Mrs. Stowe published her article; everybody was aware there was some strong reason why Lady Byron had insisted upon a separation from her husband; nobody appears to have known exactly what it was, but it was put down to incompatibility of temperament and a variety of other causes, and at all hands

Lord Byron's conduct was blamed. What does this evidence shew? Simply that Lady Byron believed her husband at the time of their separation to be insane. And, assuming that she subsequently imparted to Mrs. Beecher Stowe the charge of incestuous intercourse with his sister against her husband, it is nothing but fair for the defenders of Lord Byron to be allowed to put in a plea of insanity to this charge. Inasmuch as Lady Byron herself, who charges him with so terrible a crime, on her own showing, first suspected him of insanity. But Mrs. Stowe's statement is very far from carrying conviction with it. It is rambling and confused: she confounds names and dates, to an extent that shews she never took the trouble to read Byron's history before she wrote her article. She labours also under the disadvantage of being a novelist; and with the skill and discernment of a writer of fiction for seizing the telling points of a case, she writes her narrative. Lord and Lady Byron lived together for a year and a few days: Mrs. Stowe represents that in Lady Byron's efforts to reclaim him there were spent "two years of convulsive struggle." Mrs. Stowe is a special pleader, and in her advocacy of Lady Byron's wrongs and sufferings she rather overdoes the thing. She is an interested confidante, and not a thoroughly impartial and reliable witness. Her evidence consists of her recollections of what Lady Byron said to her, and in presenting these recollections to the world, she has, instead of giving us a plain, unvarnished tale, written an article that is couched in the language of a sensation novel. Again, the charge—as far, at all events, as Mrs. Stowe is concerned—is based upon Lady Byron's account of her husband's confessions to her. She, as an injured wife, was a prejudiced person; she offers no other evidence of the truth of her statement, and in her own conduct, as Mrs. Stowe represents it, she appears to have acted in a manner wholly inconsistent with a belief in her husband's criminal intercourse with his half-sister, Mrs. Leigh, for she suffered her only child to be named after her. And her own version of her state of mind at the time of the separation from her husband we have quoted before, in her own words. Again Mrs. Leigh, whose memory and whose fame are as much involved as Lord Byron's in the disclosure made by Mrs. Stowe, was known to a large circle of friends as a woman of high moral character, who led a pure, modest, and retired life, and who has left two daughters who loved her living, and revere her memory now she is dead,

and who are doubtless terribly afflicted by Mrs. Stowe's aspersions upon their mother's character,

We have previously given Lady Byron's account of the circumstances attending the separation in her own language, written by her at the time the occurrence took place. From the notoriety of the persons concerned, it created a great scandal at the time, and there was a great deal said and written about it. Lord Byron was pretty generally blamed as the cause of it, but he had his party, and an elaborate vindication of his conduct in the affair was published anonymously in 1816, under the title of "Separation of Lord and Lady Byron," but it contains nothing that tends to throw any light upon the present discussion. One thing, however, is quite clear, that nobody thought Lady Byron was very seriously in fault, and Mrs. Stowe's defence of her conduct, considered in this respect, is perfectly gratuitous.

Lord Byron, affected to lament the breaking up of his household, but whether seriously or not, it is not easy to determine. The following passage from a letter written subsequently to the occurrence will serve to illustrate what was, or at least what he pretended was his feeling about the separation from his wife:—

"I could have forgiven the dagger or the bowl, anything but the deliberate desolation piled on me, when I stood alone upon my hearth with my household gods shivered around me."—*Byron Letters*, Sept. 10, 1818.

Mrs. Stowe's version of the causes that brought about the separation is stated by her to be "genuine and authentic;" the family solicitors deny in so many words that it is either complete or authentic, and they, accepting her own account of what transpired at her interview with Lady Byron in 1856, very naturally charge her with breach of the trust and confidence reposed in her; secondly, with having acted in a manner wholly inconsistent with the course of conduct she at that time says she recommended to Lady Byron; and thirdly, with a violation—possibly an ignorant and unintentional one—of Lady Byron's last will by which instrument she bequeathed the whole of her papers and manuscripts to three trustees, who alone were to have access to them, and were directed by the testator to use them only in such a manner as they might consider best suited to serve the interests of her grandchildren; and they—Messrs. Wharton and Fords—conclude by saying that it would have been well

if Mrs. Stowe had concealed her knowledge, true or false, and herself observed that "religious silence" she was so very ready to commend in Lady Byron. That Mrs. Stowe's publication of this secret, without consulting the feelings or wishes of the persons most intimately concerned in the matter, was in the worst possible taste, is the most merciful comment we can make upon her conduct. She has laid herself open to a large amount of criticism, and has received from her critics, both in England and America, a very fair share of abuse; and for her folly she certainly deserves some chastisement; but we acquit her at once of all mercenary or other improper motives in the matter, believing her to be a well-meaning, tolerably clever, and not very prudent woman. We have no doubt she felt keenly, though very needlessly, the attacks made by the Countess Guiccioli upon the character of a lady, whose moral character Mrs. Stowe compares to that of our Saviour, and whose gentleness and forbearance she describes as more than human. In this part of her story she is curiously inconsistent, "thinking that no person in England would as yet undertake the responsibility of relating the true history, which is to clear Lady Byron's memory," and so supplying the world with one herself, and yet after Lady Byron's death, and, we presume, quite irrespectively of any publications of the Countess Guiccioli, she looked *anxiously hoping to see a memoir* of the person whom she considered the most remarkable woman that England had produced in this century." Her praises of the character of Lady Byron are exaggerated and extravagant to hyperbole and compel her to paint Lord Byron in equally strong colours. If with Mrs. Stowe the wife was an angel in human form, the husband was at least an incarnate fiend, and probably all Mrs. Stowe knew of the character of the latter, she learned from his widow's description of him; and having heard and accepted as the truth that narration, she would of course shrink from reading his works, or an acquaintance with this verse might have saved her the mistake she fell into of representing the married life of Lord and Lady Byron as having lasted for two years.

> "This day of all our days has done
> The worst for me and you;
> 'Tis just *six* years since we were *one*,
> And *five* since we were *two*."

Of the internal evidence of the truth of Mrs. Stowe's "True

Story," drawn from Byron's writings after he left England, a great deal has been made. We do not attach much value to it. It is at least unfair, to charge a poet with a sympathy for the criminal thoughts and deeds of all his creations; but people always did this with Byron, they fettered all his wicked heroes upon him; in this, indeed, Byron is the very literary antithesis of Shakspeare. Nobody picks out a character from "Othello," "Macbeth," or "Hamlet," and says *this* is the poet himself; but they did this with "Manfred" and "Arnold," and half-a-dozen others of Byron's fanciful creations; and possibly not without some cause, but we do not think it follows that because he drew some very villainous characters, that he sympathized with their crimes. Again, the passionate verses he addressed to his sister may be the honest outbursts of eloquent affection, or they may be—what Mrs. Stowe says they are. In a word, they may be made to prove anything, and really prove nothing. Mrs. Stowe asks us to believe a series of improbabilities: she asks us to believe that Byron and his sister conceived for each other an incestuous, and in Mrs. Leigh's case, an adulterous passion, and that they indulged this passion; that Lord Byron married a woman he did not care one straw about, in order that his marriage might serve as a cloak for his incest (though to place over his actions the jealous eye of a virtuous lady seems a strange expedient to have adopted for this purpose). We are then asked to credit the statement that he confessed this passion to Lady Byron, probably merely to torment her by the contemplation of such an unnatural enormity of guilt; that he argued the case with her, and asserted the right of every human being to follow out what he called the "impulses of nature;" that Lady Byron, instead of spurning such a monster with the loathing he deserved, "followed him through all his sophistical reasonings with a keener reason;" listened to him when he gave her a sketch of the "good-humoured marriage in which complaisant couples mutually agree to form the cloak for *each other's* infidelities," *i. e.*, suggested adultery to his wife; and that Lady Byron, instead of proclaiming this infamy to the world, and instantly fleeing from his roof, coolly and quietly replied, "I am too truly your friend to do this;" and with a full knowledge of his incestuous passion for his sister, permitted her infant daughter to receive her *Christian* name from such an aunt; and that in the face of this consuming passion

for his sister, he left her for ever and went voluntarily into perpetual exile.

Thus considered, the great improbability of Mrs. Stowe's statement is seen in its full force. If it is, after all, a mere balance of probabilities, whether these things happened, as Mrs. Stowe states, on Lady Byron's authority, or whether Mrs. Stowe or Lady Byron, or both, were mistaken in their view of Byron's conduct and sentiments, our verdict must be for the charitable to the memory of the dead poet. Indeed, believe Mrs. Beecher Stowe's "revelations;" believe that a man of intellect so rare, of such fine feelings and keen susceptibilities committed such crimes; believe, in a word, that the *man* Byron did all these, and our faith in human nature is gone. As the case stands, we put no faith in the truth of Mrs. Stowe's narrative.

We give her credit for believing honestly in it herself, and for having acted with good faith, as she thought, in making her disclosure. Now comes the difficulty: if Mrs. Stowe substantially tells truth, and is sufficiently accurate in her recollection of what passed between Lady Byron and herself thirteen years ago, and if Lady Byron also told what she believed was the truth concerning her dead husband, how is this to be reconciled with a belief in Lord Byron's innocence of the crimes charged against him? Admitting, as we do, the claims of both these ladies upon our credit, we must confess a satisfactory explanation is not easily made. All we can do is to suggest the following: That Lady Byron was completely imposed upon by the vague and nameless charges; her husband in his gloomy words, no doubt often brought against himself, charges that very likely had foundation enough in the wild life he had led, and possibly in his marital infidelity even during the short period of their cohabitation. That she, during the period of their separation, and after her husband's death, throughout her long widowhood brooded over his language, and conceived the notion that he had been guilty of incest. To this may be added the possibility that Lady Byron, whose changeable moods are well known, was really a hypochondriac, the victim of a hallucination when in her old age and declining faculties she made her statement to Mrs. Stowe. The least that can be said about it is that it was a very extraordinary thing for her to confide such a carefully guarded secret to such a stranger. And we do not think Mrs. Stowe's explanation of her reason for so doing a suffi-

ciently strong one. Supposing that her mind was sound at the time of Mrs. Stowe's second visit to England in 1856, her own judgment and her own consience ought to have dictated to her very clearly what was the right course for her to pursue in the matter, without any advice or help from Mrs. Stowe. She must have come to the conclusion that, after the lapse of so long a time, no good and much mischief would ensue from the revelation of her secret. This course Lady Byron took herself, and it would have been very much to Mrs. Stowe's credit if she had done so too. If her husband, to her knowledge, acted as she told Mrs. Stowe he did, her silence at the time of the separation was a marvel of patience and forbearance and Christian charity. But as we have said, we cannot lend the ear of credence to such a story. Byron believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, and no man who believed in a God could have acted as he is said to have acted.

"How," said he to Count Gamba in 1820, "raising our eyes to heaven, or directing them to the earth, can we doubt of the existence of God?—or how, turning them to what is within us, can we doubt that there is something more noble and durable than the clay of which we are formed?"

If his conversion to this belief was subsequent to his alleged crime, he would probably have put an end to his own existence—no man could bear such a weight of sin. If he believed in God at a time antecedent to his alleged crime, he could by no possibility have committed it. Vicious and depraved as it must be admitted his life often was, the abyss of infamy which Mrs. Stowe's "true story" reveals, is too deep even for Byron to be supposed to have fallen into it. He knew what was right well enough, and there is a bright as well as a dark side to his character.

Of charity he says, "If that was to be brought I have given more to my fellow-creatures in this life—sometimes for vice, but if not more *often*, at least more considerably for virtue—than I now possess. I never in my life gave a mistress so much as I have sometimes given a poor man in honest distress. But no matter! The scoundrels who have all along persecuted me will triumph, and when justice is done to me, it will be when this hand that writes is as cold as the hearts which have stung it. ("Byron's Diary," 1821.)

In spite of Mrs. Stowe's "revelation," justice will still be

done him by all impartial persons: the hand that penned his poems is cold and dead, but his verses live, and will live, as they deserve, so long as imagination, eloquence, and expression are admired in English poetry. As for Byron's fame and character, Mrs. Stowe has left them precisely where she found them.

THE END.

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A LETTER

FROM

GEORGE THE COUNT JOHANNES

TO

"THE NEW YORK HERALD."—September 4.

The Libel upon Lord Byron and his Sister Augusta Nailed to the Pillory of Falsehood by George, the Count Johannes—Deathbed Declaration by Byron—Family Narrative by the Sister to the Count at St. James' Palace—Queen Victoria to the Rescue—Triumphant Defence of Innocence.

To the Editor of the Herald.

To libel the living is at all times a cowardly crime, but it is doubly so, and in its mendacity and malice tenfold, when the dead are the objects of the slander. The law protects the reputation of the dead as well as the living, and for the reason that if it did not, then revenge of the living would fall upon the libellers of the dead. But the "law's delay" is too slow to meet some cases, and were the writer of the libel now engrossing public attention not a woman, it is possible that there is one man at least in this community that would personally resent it. No reader can doubt the talents of Mrs. Stowe as a fiction writer, and as proved by "Uncle Tom's Cabin," but she has now eclipsed herself by this atrocious libel upon one of her own sex, in connection with Lord Byron. I claim the privilege of establishing the falsity of the incestuous charge, and my knowledge is founded upon personal acquaintance and friendship with the Hon. Mrs. Augusta Leigh herself for more than seven years, also with the Countess Guiccioli, and with the Earl of Harrington, formerly Colonel the Hon. Leicester Stanhope, Lord Byron's intimate friend and mine for more than twenty years, and who had a conversation upon the very theme with Lord Byron scarcely an hour before the poet died, and which was about to be renewed with Mr. William Fletcher, his lordship's *valet en chef*, when death permitted only broken sentences. These accumulated incidents form part of my MS. autobiography, but the present occasion demands from my friendship to the just memory of the dead that I anticipate the truth

at this time, inasmuch as the subject has suddenly been published in such libellous form as to be the theme of society throughout America, and must be in Europe. In my observations I shall not regard Mrs. Stowe in her character of the matron, nor in any of those domestic virtues which proverbially belong to her; but I claim the privilege as a public critic to review what she has caused to be published as an author, without fear or favour, and doubly do I claim the right of defending from a libellous charge a lady friend, now dead, who, being thus shamefully calumniated, cannot defend herself. In fact, all persons implicated or interested are waited for by Mrs. Stowe until they are dead before she gives to the world this monster of libellous conception, and for which she is or will be paid money, as it is fair to assume, from the fact, that she is a public writer of repute and for a talented periodical, which may now be termed "The Incest Libel Monthly of the Atlantic;" and your readers will legally observe that the greater the reputation of the authoress and the magazine of nitro-glycerine combustibles, the greater the injury and the explosive danger, the greater the wrong to the memory of the dead and to the reputation and wounded feelings of the living, and the greater the damages in law, as also the punishment upon indictment and conviction, as the libellers will find hereafter.

It is a legal rule in the cross-examination of a witness that if an untruth can be proved in his previous examination in chief then falsehood permeates through the entire testimony. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus*—false in one, false in all. Now, to apply this rule of evidence to Mrs. Stowe. She states three times in her narrative that Lord and Lady Byron lived together two years, and during which time "she struggled with the fiends," &c. Now, it is notorious and historically true that they were married on January 2, 1815, and separated for ever on January 15, 1816, their only child having been born on December 10, 1815. Thus they lived together only one year and a few days. Again, Mrs. Stowe always mentions the accused lady as having been Lord "Byron's own sister." She was only the half-sister of the poet, holding the same blood relationship as Abraham did to his wife Sarah. And, to make the direct accusation more appalling, the Puritan authoress directly charges that an incestuous "child of sin" was born of the body of the sister of Byron, and he himself the father! and that Lady Byron confided to her, in writing, the secret! The perfection of libel is *suppressio veri et suggestio falsi*—the concealment of truth and the invention and assertion of falsehood—both of which obtain in the foregoing premises. Mrs. Stowe never mentions that the "sister" was married, though she knew it. The faithful and noble-hearted Augusta—worth a legion of Lady Byrons—was married, and to an officer of the British army, Colonel George Leigh, alluded to in the will of Lord Byron as being the husband of Augusta. This will was made and executed on July 29, 1815, only about six months after Lord Byron's marriage, and it is notorious that the poet never saw Augusta again after he left England in April, 1816. The only child of Lord Byron by his wife was baptized Ada Augusta—named after the very lady now so maliciously libelled, and who was the virtuous mother of a legitimate child, born to her by her marriage with Colonel George Leigh. Can infamy go further down to the depths of hell than to conceal from the public this lady's marriage, and her maritally

conceived and born child, and declare it to be the incestuous offspring of her own brother? Yes! Mrs. Stowe charges the Lady Augusta with the triple moral sins of fornication, adultery, and incest—even to maternity. The triple-headed Cerberus of hell alone is the proper emblem of this demoniac and atrocious libel. Of course, I never personally knew Lord Byron, the poet—he died when I was a child; but I have intimately known several of his intimate friends, and I select (as subjoined) from the number those with whom I have conversed upon this very subject, and who had the indignant denial from Lord Byron himself, and as I had it from the Lady Augusta; and superadded is the deathbed declaration of the poet to his intimate and heroic friend at Missolonghi, Colonel the Honourable Leicester Stanhope, afterwards the Earl of Harrington, who had the distinguished charge of the dead body of Byron to England. Also I cite Queen Victoria in defence of the calumniated lady, with which testimony I shall conclude this letter.

THE DEFORMITY OF LORD BYRON HIS CURSE.

It is a well-known fact in human history that there is nothing so quickly creates a hatred of another as to taunt any person with his physical deformity, especially if the person is of a quick and nervous temperament, as was notoriously George Gordon Byron. At the time of his birth an accident caused a malformation of one of his feet and legs, of this he was feverishly sensitive, and any allusion to it would drive him into a furious rage; and even as a child of only four years, he resented it by striking his nurse's friend with a whip for alluding to it—contrasting as she did the beauty of his face with the deformity of his leg and foot, which to him throughout his life was a hideous contrast. It was the same to him as was the withered arm and deformed legs to Richard III., and my readers will remember Gloster's soliloquy, viz., "To shrink my arm up like a withered shrub; to shape my legs of an unequal size, that the dogs bark at me as I halt by them." Now, when Lord Byron said to his bride "You will find that you have married a devil"—as cited by Mrs. Stowe, but as if he really meant Satan—he simply alluded in bitter sarcasm to his deformed foot—more resembling the devil's than man's. And through his life he took the utmost trouble by his costume, &c., to conceal the deformity; but what in that respect can you conceal from your wife or your valet? Thence it was that Lord Byron on the day of his dying commanded that no person but his faithful valet, William Fletcher, should see his naked body for the lavatory rites—a command broken by "Trelawney the Terrible," who "at one view beheld an Apollo and Satyr," as he told me as we stood together at the burial of William Godwin. Byron was well read in Shakespeare, and that prince of poets says of women, "The eye must be fed, and what delight can she have to look upon the devil?" It was that very thought which caused his remark to his newly-married wife, and in due time she found out that truth, and regarded with shuddering all marital rights.

THE TRUE CAUSE OF QUARREL AND SEPARATION.

Two years before his marriage with Miss Milbanke Lord Byron had been

rejected by her—a circumstance never forgotten by man. In a reckless, inebriated moment, incited by wine and Sheridan—who regarded his poet friend (one of the committee of Drury Lane theatre) as a species of Sir Charles Surface)—Byron wrote for a wife, and addressed two ladies, half in jest, half in earnest, proposing marriage, and to his amazement he was accepted, and by Miss Milbanke. Never were united two beings more anti-sympathetic. He a volcano of poetic fire; she a frozen fountain of the ice brook temper. He, from his beauty, genius and generosity, having no jealousy; she, comparatively plain in features, viewed with hatred the admiration of handsome women for her husband, and thence she became mentally "bound into saucy doubts and fears;" and the jealous are not jealous for a cause, but jealous because they are jealous, as says Shakespeare.

It is generally called the "honeymoon"—the first four weeks of marriage; but Byron called his the "treaclemoon," and certainly it was a "brimstone and treacle" matrimony. They were married on January 2, 1815, he being twenty-seven years and she twenty-three years of age, respectively, having been born in 1788 and 1792, and they separated for ever on January 15, 1816, having been married only one year and thirteen days.

* * * * * * * *

What, then, caused the separation? Here is the true secret, and the "curse" was the chief cause. In the sixth week of their marriage, and during a jealous mood, Lady Byron fearfully resented a remark of a love-memory of Lord Byron's, who said, "I deeply regret to know that my beloved Mary Chaworth was very unhappy in her marriage. Ah; it might have been different had we married!" Upon this sighing remark Lady Byron instantly arose, and in great anger uttered these fatal words:—"Mary Chaworth rejected you for your deformity, as I did once, and it had been better if I had still rejected a man with a devil's foot;" and with those terrible words she left the apartment. To Lord Byron, sensitive as the quivering aspen leaf upon that very fact of his deformity—his "curse of life," as he once said to Trelawney—those fearful words were as daggers in the breast of love, esteem, or respect, and from that moment ceased all sexual knowledge of his wife, and as the woman he never knew her more. Each kept their own apartments; and thus in solitude each sought those friends best entitled to advise. Lady Byron, in another evil moment, as if destiny was driving her to marital desolation, sent for her former governess—the human being who was the cause why Miss Millbanke had formerly rejected Lord Byron. She came, and, of course, took sides with her former pupil, over whose mind she had great influence, and sanctioned even the brutal remarks upon the deformity of the husband, and this was quickly communicated to his lordship. Then it was that the wounded poet's brother sent for the faithful and devoted Augusta, his half sister. She was his senior by five years—she having been born in 1783; married in 1807—and at this time (1815) the eight years' wife of Colonel George Leigh, of the British army, and the mother of a child born of that marriage; and Augusta at this time was thirty-two years of age, and Lady Byron only twenty-three years. Except at about the marriage period this was the first time that Lady Byron had seen the Honourable Mrs. Leigh, and with the indignation, from the savage insult and wrong her brother had received, well might the slight, fragile form and features of Lady Byron

shrink abashed before the majestic figure, the queenly dignity, the intellectual and mild look of sisterly reproach from the Lady Augusta, dignified by that title in society—less in courtesy than to her character as a *gentillissima*—a very "lady of ladies," and as such was finally honoured by the Queen of Great Britain, as I will prove. The ancient governess arrived in the latter part of the month of February, and the honourable Mrs. Colonel Leigh in the middle of March, 1815; and what followed established that the former became the "damned Iago" of the family, and worse, being a female; and the latter, the Lady Augusta, a species of innocent Desdemona; the poet, an equally innocent Cassio, while Lady Byron became a self-consuming jealous Othello. The first resolution of the brother upon the arrival of his sister was that he would separate from his wife, and by a legal document to that effect. This resolution was successfully resisted by the honourable Mrs. Leigh, upon the paternal ground that, as Lady Byron was *enciente*, and in a few months would become a mother, should the husband separate by a legal document, or otherwise, before the birth, it would cast a lasting reproach upon the child as to the true father. This argument was conclusive with Lord Byron; for he never doubted the chastity of his wife, and would endure his wrongs rather than injure her reputation, or that of their future unborn innocent child. He therefore concluded to remain domiciled until after the birth, and then, upon the convalescence of the mother to separate, at least for a time; but an event soon took place, from the malice of "the female Iago," which made Byron finally determine to be separated for ever. I have already shown the dignified character of the beauty of Lady Augusta; it formed a perfect contrast with Lady Byron's, and as the latter was prone to be jealous it was no difficult matter to create that feeling towards Augusta, and finally of a criminal suspicion, instigated by the fiendish governess, who urged the natural fact to convey belief, viz., that the Hon. Mrs. Leigh was only the half sister of the poet. This poisonous suggestion having entered the brain of Lady Byron, created from the serpent shrine of slander, it fatally permeated her intellect until she became upon that false idea a monomaniac, and thence she lived and so she died. It was the first week of July, 1815, in a scene of quarrel, that Lord Byron was indirectly accused by Lady Byron with being "over-fond of his half sister, Augusta, and that the suspicions of my governess are not without foundation." This false and malignant aspersion upon his sister and the wife of Colonel Leigh, conjoined with the previous insult regarding his deformity, determined Lord Byron that, after the *accouchement* of Lady Byron they should separate for ever. The brother and sister confronted their accusers; they were abashed and silent, and Lady Byron cast the responsibility entirely upon the governess, whom the poet has immortalized in the sketch—

> "Born in a garret, in the kitchen bred,
> Promoted thence to deck her mistress' head," &c.

it being the most powerful invective from the pen of man, and could only emanate against a woman upon the ground of false, malignant, and demoniac wrong received by the author, and also his true and irreproachable sister.

Following the above scene, Lord Byron made and duly executed his last will and testament on the 29th of July, 1815, leaving all his property to his sister, "Augusta Mary Leigh, wife of George Leigh, Esq.," and in the same will he writes that "Lady Byron and any children I may have being amply provided for." The former will, made in 1811, was by law vacated and void by his marriage in 1815.

On the 10th of December, 1815, the only child of Lord and Lady Byron was born. Some time previous to this event the mother had sought reconciliation with the husband; but he was firm in his resolution to separate. She expressed contrition, atonement, and entire disbelief in the criminal suggestion; and as a public confession of her injustice to the injured sister Lady Byron herself proposed (mark this, Mrs. Stowe) that the unborn child, if a girl, should not only be named Ada, the father's selection, but also Augusta, impressing that innocent name as a seal of purity upon the virgin jewel yet within the casket of human nature. By the justice of God it was so; and the child was baptized "Ada Augusta," and as she grew to womanhood, and was married, she used that name in preference to Ada, in justice to her father and his sister, and thence she became alienated from her mother. Lady Byron had the lingering hope of preventing her husband leaving England, and "madness" was suggested as a means to an end, but this only expedited the issue; for they separated within six weeks after Ada Augusta's birth.

The day of separation came (January 15, 1816), but the statement by Mrs. Stowe of that final interview is entirely false and unnatural, and also malignant in its criminal assertion. The authoress writes that "Lady Byron went into her husband's room, where he and the partner of his sins (the Hon. Mrs. Leigh) were sitting together, and said, 'Byron, I come to say good bye,'" &c. There is falsity in the very phrase "Byron." The ignorance of Mrs. Stowe as to the domestic phraseology of high society in England has betrayed her. Ladies and gentlemen of rank in married life —and even of royalty, as I know personally—as among the more humble classes, address each other by their baptismal names, as George, and Mary, &c., when in the domestic circle and friendly. If otherwise the address would be "My Lord," or "Lord Byron." Noblemen, bachelors, and most intimate gentlemen friends of rank alone, address each other by their title or family surnames. Now, the facts of the "Farewell" are these:—Lord Byron left his own room and went into that of Lady Byron's to take farewell of his wife and daughter, and he had sent word to that effect. There were present the father, mother, and infant child (the nurse left upon his entrance). The husband received into his arms "Ada Augusta," kissed her with deep emotion and wept. He took the hand of his weeping wife, and while thus situated (a group for the painter or sculptor) he said, with a deep sigh, the words of his favourite author, Shakspeare, "When shall we three meet again?" to which the wife responded, "On earth, I hope." Lord Byron replied, "In heaven, I trust;" and those were his last words to her, as he gave back the infant to its mother and silently and slowly left the chamber, and with royal etiquette, face to face. So "Lady Byron's caressing the spaniel," &c., is another fiction; and well it might be, since the spaniel was a large dog of the Mont St. Bernard breed, and always at night guarded his master's door, as formerly when at Newstead. There in

the daytime the noble dog was the playful companion of the wolf and bear that guarded right and left the monastic staircase of the ancient Abbey.

On April 25, 1816, Lord Byron left England for ever, and never again saw his wife, child, or sister. The poet died at the early age of thirty-five years, and the marble tablet to his memory over his grave in the village church near Newstead Abbey was erected by that faithful sister, of whom he had written:—

"Thou stood'st, as stands a lovely tree,
That, still unbroke though gently bent,
Still waves, with fond fidelity,
Its boughs above a monument."

The foregoing narrative and solemn denial of the slander I received from the Hon. Mrs. Augusta Leigh, personally at her residence in St. James' Palace, London. Ay! Madame Stowe, at St. James' Palace, as I will prove.

LADY BYRON AND THE "FATHER'S CHILD."

The wife having failed to retain the husband, resolved, with the Iago governess, to bring up and educate the daughter in total ignorance of her father, and especially as to his talents as an author. Consequently she had no knowledge of his poetry until after her marriage, when one day in her husband's library she first saw a volume entitled "Byron's Works." Lord Byron believed that his wife would "bring up" his daughter correctly and justly; for in 1823, when she was eight years old, he wrote to Lady Blessington that he should not interfere with the education of his daughter, having full faith in Lady Byron's justice in that respect, and trusted her entirely. I have seen and read the original letter by the courtesy of Lady Blessington. Now, see how Lady Byron fulfilled her duty and its results. The daughter by her marriage became Lady King, and subsequently the Countess of Lovelace, by her husband's inheriting the earldom. At one period the daughter was very ill and had not seen her mother for a long time, and would not, in resentment of the wrongs and insults to her father. Lady Byron tried every persuasion by friends, but failed. At last the daughter, as if to settle the question, in resolution said, and knowing her mother's fondness for money, "By a vow fulfilled, Lady Godiva took off a tax; I make a vow, and will keep it, but to put on a tax; I vow not to see Lady Byron until she first pays off my own private debts." When the mother received this message she remonstrated, but of no avail. "I am my father's child," Ada said, and finally Lady Byron did pay the debts, amounting to several thousand pounds sterling, and then hastened to the bedside of her daughter, to her amazement and almost danger to her life. The above is true, and narrated to me by the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, and also by the mother of the Countess of Harrington, sister to the Duchess of Bedford.

Who is Mrs. Beecher Stowe, the authoress? Who is the person that charges wholesale libels upon the dead? Who is she that accuses Lord Byron with sexual guilt with the innocent and chaste Mary Chaworth! Cannot the

authoress pass in review without libel, even the "Dream" of the poet's life? She writes:—"It was not memory of Mary Chaworth, but another guilty and more damning memory that overshadowed that hour of marriage." Who is the human being who makes, or circulates, the double charge of adultery?—thus creating the virgin blush upon the cheeks of maiden innocence, and that of indignation upon those of matrons, and fearless and outspoken denunciation from every condition of society? I ask again who is Mrs. Beecher Stowe, the authoress? Oh, answer it not in Gath, reply not in the streets of Askalon, but here, in Manhattan, speak out in the name of insulted religion. She is the wife of a clergyman; she is the daughter of a clergyman; she is the sister of two clergymen—and all of them New England clergymen. And had the charges been even true, Christian charity, before sacred pulpits were changed into political rostra, should have taught her to cast oblivion upon the deed and the dead. If that is the result of teaching from a family of clergymen, of course, all anti-democratic, as is the magazine, then quickly may their churches be closed in mourning for the fatal fall—ay, thousands of fathoms deep—of the chief daughter of their house. Yes, the primal fall of the angel Lucifer from the bright presence of Almighty God into the dark abyss of surging waves of misery was not more sudden and for all time than is that of Harriet Beecher Stowe from her former high sphere into the dark caverns of charnel-house oblivion and condemnation.

The American press never gave a nobler proof of its high mission than in its utter denunciation of the libels and their mercenary publication; and from this day forth no virtuous matron, no chaste daughter, no honest man should support the *Atlantic Monthly*, for now to have it in their homes will stain their own reputations, as supporting the most infamous and malignant libels in the history of the living or the dead. Throughout England and Europe generally there will be condemnation and resentment, for it is a gross insult to their beloved Queen, that Her Majesty housed for years in her own palace an adulterous wife.

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SOLEMN DENIAL BY LORD BYRON ON HIS DEATH-BED.

In a conversation I had with the late Field Marshal, the Duke of Wellington—the warrior of Waterloo—and having read my "Biography of General President Harrison," he was pleased to say that he wished such a pen would do him justice after his death in regard to the only event of his life in which justice had not been done, viz.:—"It is said that I could have saved the life of the brave Marshal Ney. I could not. I tried. But King Louis XVIII. was inexorable." The Duke of Wellington then told me circumstances of proof which are now in my manuscript autobiography. In a similar manner Lord Byron wished justice upon one theme, viz., that in regard to his sister, and he besought a friend, to whom he wrote, "not to suffer unmerited censure to rest upon his name after death." To the Countess Guiccioli, the Countess of Blessington, Viscount Canterbury (formerly Speaker of the House of Commons), the Count D'Orsay and the Cornwall Trelawney, he solemnly denied the truth of the imputa-

tion, and from those personages I received that denial in solemn conversation. There is, however, another proof more solemn. When a man is assassinated and in his dying moments he proclaims his murderer it is proof of the criminal, and all other dying confessions are received with equal reverential solemnity. I now transfer the reader to the death-bed of Lord Byron at Missolonghi, on April 19, A.D, 1824. There were present, among others, Count Pietro Gamba, the brother of the Countess Guiccioli; Trelawney, of Cornwall; William Fletcher, the valet; and Colonel the Honourable Leicester Stanhope, afterwards the Earl of Harrington. This gentleman honoured me with his friendship to the day of his death, extending over a period from 1834 for more than twenty years. I was intimate with him and in his confidence, and often was his invited guest in London and at Ashburnham House, his country residence. This was the democratic nobleman who introduced the free press in India, and was the patriotic champion, with his friend and democrat, Lord Byron, for the freedom of the classic land of Marathon and Miltiades, and towards that noble cause advanced from his own purse the sum of 16,000*l.* (80,000doll). Within the dying hour of the great poet Lord Byron requested all to leave the chamber except Colonel the Honourable Leicester Stanhope. The poet then knew that he was dying, and said to his friend, "Stanhope, I wish you to take charge of my dead body to England. See that it is buried in the grave of my mother." [Both these dying wishes were fulfilled by the friend.] "Stanhope, I declare to you, at this solemn moment, that the former accusation by Lady Byron against me and my faithful sister was

A lie, an odious, damned lie!
Upon my soul, a wicked lie!

and so defend us when again assailed."

Colonel Stanhope took the hand of his dying friend, and said:—"Byron, the name of Augusta being added to that of Ada at the baptism of your daughter, and at the request of Lady Byron, as told me by your sister, dispersed that slander for ever; but if you would be happier, send your dying declaration by your confidential valet, Fletcher, and order him to see Lady Byron with your death denial." "I will do so," said the young poet. "Send Fletcher to me. God bless you, Stanhope. Of all men you I best love. You will live to see the freedom of this classic land when I shall be no more. Adieu!"

With many tears Colonel Stanhope bade adieu to his friend for ever, and within half-an-hour thereafter Fletcher was at the bedside of his dying master. Then took place the oft-repeated broken sentences cited by Mrs. Stowe and others, but now explained by the previous interview with Colonel Stanhope:—"Go to my sister—tell her—go to Lady Byron—you will see her, and say"—here his voice failed from exhaustion. But, had he power, who can doubt but the dying man would have repeated to his faithful valet what he had already declared to his faithful friend?

REQUIESCAT IN PACE.

I was at Ashburnham House, on the Sunday following the evening I passed with the Honourable Mrs. Leigh at St. James' Palace, when she related what I have recited; and speaking of the subject to the Earl of Harrington (the former Colonel Stanhope), he narrated to me the dying declaration to him by his dying friend Lord Byron at Missolonghi, and authorised me, should the occasion call for it, to repeat his words, as the sister had her narrative; and the present libellous occasion does call for it, and I have done my duty.

QUEEN VICTORIA DEFENDS THE INNOCENT.

In conclusion, I now produce a proof of innocence which, if Mrs. Stowe knew and concealed from the public, is, in itself, a crime upon the dead; if she did not know it, then she is unfit to be the writer of history, being ignorant of facts.

It is the custom of the queens of England when any lady of rank has been overtaken by comparative poverty, by misfortune, or any honourable cause, to present gratuitously to the distressed lady a suite of furnished apartments, cuisine, &c., in one of her Majesty's palaces, either at Hampton Court, Holyrood, or, a greater compliment still, in the Royal Palace of St. James', London. Need I add that personal chastity and the matronly virtues are the conditions precedent with Queen Victoria? She herself the model wife, widow and Queen to all posterity! I say to the libellous authoress, "O shame, where is thy blush?" to conceal from the public the great moral fact which here follows:—

The Queen of Great Britain, Victoria the Good! God bless her! in sympathy to the monetary misfortunes of a lady of rank (from the improvidence of her husband), and that lady having the right of entree to her Majesty's drawing-room, even upon state occasions, the Queen gave to that lady for life a suite of regal apartments at St. James' Palace, and that lady's name was engraved on a silver plate and placed on the front door of those apartments, publicly seen at all times, in the royal banner square of the palace. Who was that lady whom the Queen delighted to honour? Does the reader ask? Do the poisonous publishers of the libel ask? Then thus I answer to them and to all the world, and dare denial of its truth—that lady was this very slandered Augusta, the Hon. Mrs. Colonel Leigh, the half sister of Lord Byron, the poet, and this royal honour was publicly enjoyed by Lady Augusta while Lady Byron lived!

In that palace, in her own apartments, I repeatedly saw the Hon. Mrs. Leigh, received her hospitality, passed evenings with her and freely conversed of her poet brother and his eventful life, and each of us without reserve. And she also honoured me by accepting my friendship, and which I again prove, though she is in her grave with her brother, by thus publicly defending her reputation; and where I in France I would do so even to the death. My brother editors who have published the libel from the *Atlantic Monthly*—though they nobly scorned it—will, in justice to the dead, copy this refutation of the irreligious, fiendish, and cowardly calumny. The spirit

of Byron whispers to me these lines upon the original slanderer of himself and sister, and a new couplet of verses upon the renewal of the libel:—

"Oh! may thy grave be sleepless as the bed,
The widow'd couch of fire, that thou hast spread!
Down to the dust! and as thou rott'st away,
Even worms shall perish on thy poisonous clay!
Ten thousand depths in Dante's hell, below,
Be hurl'd to infamy the novels of Stowe."

I remain, yours respectfully, &c.,

GEORGE THE COUNT JOHANNES,
Of the Supreme Court of New York.

New York, August, 1869.

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